

FATE and DESTINY, Inconsistent
with CHRISTIANITY:

OR, THE
Horrid Decree
Of Absolute and Unconditional
Election and Reprobation,
FULLY DETECTED.

SHEWING

The **Grand Error**, of asserting, that CHRIST did
not Die for All Men, but for an Elect Number only.

In Eight CONFERENCES, between
EPENETUS and EUTYCHUS:

WHEREIN

The most material Pretences, urg'd in Favour of those Prin-
ciples, are clearly Stated, and Answered; And Man prov'd
to be the sole Efficient Cause of his own Destruction.

By EDWARD BIRD.

Hos. 13. 9. *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thy self, but in me is
thine help.*

Job 34. 10. — *Far be it from God, that he should do wicked-
ness, and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity.*

Job 5. 27. *Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and
know thou it for thy good.*

L O N D O N:

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THE HISTORY OF THE
CITY OF LONDON

OF THE

CHURCHES

AND
OF THE
CITY OF LONDON

THE
CITY OF LONDON
AND THE
CITY OF LONDON

THE
CITY OF LONDON
AND THE
CITY OF LONDON





To the Reverend
George Stanhope, D. D.
Dean of CANTERBURY,
Chaplain in Ordinary to His MAJESTY.

Reverend SIR,

I Humbly take Leave
of doing my self the
Honour of this DEDI-
CATION; and I am
the more embolden'd, from the
Encouragement I have received
from You, to Print the following
Sheets, having first favour'd me
A 2 with

The Epistle Dedicatory.
with a Perusal of them in Manuscript.

Indeed, Your Example to promote True Religion, and Sound Principles, is such, that it would be Arrogance and Presumption in me, to attempt a Description thereof. For Words need not be used to form an Idea, of what the Public have more happily Enjoy'd from your Pious Labours, both from the Pulpit and the Press, (especially this Parish) by many Years Experience.

The Subject-Matter I have treated on, is built upon a Large and Noble Foundation, no less than that most Amiable and Comfortable Attribute of God, his Infinite Love and Beneficence; an Attribute which he seems most
De-

The Epistle Dedicatory.

Delighted in, and for the Honour of which, to have a more Tender Regard, than for any other.

Therefore those Persons who shall presume to Detract from this Attribute, are guilty of the greatest Sacrilege they can commit; because they rob God of the brightest Pearl of his Divine Majesty. For God is LOVE: His tender Mercies are over all his Works, Psal. 145. 9. So that nothing can bring a greater Scandal, nor do more Harm to Religion, than those Principles of some Persons, which confine God's Mercies to a very Few only: Who make a great Noise, and pretend a mighty Zeal in Magnifying the Freeness of God's Grace, and at the very same

A 3

time,

The Epistle Dedicatory.

time, take away the Fulness of it; and so form base and narrow Conceptions of Almighty G O D; representing him a Being, full of Partiality, Cruelty, and Injustice; Contriving and Resolving on the Ruin of his Creatures, on Purpose to shew his Absolute Dominion over them. In direct Opposition to what God has deliver'd to us, in the Holy Scriptures, where we are told, That his Ways are equal, Ezek. 18. 29. That there is no respect of Persons with him, Rom. 2. 11. That he is rich in Mercy towards all, Eph. 2. 4. Rom. 10. 12. And abundant in Goodness and Truth, &c.

My Design in the following Discourse, is to Rescue (if I can)

The Epistle Dedicatory.

can) some *Well-meaning People*,
and to Secure others, from the *Dan-*
ger of the contrary Opinions ; and
accordingly I have compris'd, in as
little Compass, and with as much
Plainness as I could, many Impor-
tant Truths and Arguments, which
otherwise might cost my Readers
a great deal of Time and Expence,
to Furnish themselves withal. So
that those Persons, whose Mis-
fortune it is to be Mistaken, as
to the Subject here treated on, may
see the false Notions and ground-
less Principles they build upon.

And as I have omitted nothing
which I thought Necessary on this
Occasion ; so I have taken Care,
not to insert any Thing that
might seem Impertinent, but have
endeavour'd to make the Whole

The Epistle Dedicatory.
as Useful and Instructive as possible.

May what I have done, tend to the Glory of God, the Convincing of the Erroneous, and the Satisfying of the Doubtful and Scrupulous, is the sincere and hearty Prayer of him, who with the utmost Deference and most profound Respect, assumes the Liberty of Subscribing himself,

Reverend SIR,

Your most Obedient,

and most Obliged,

Humble Servant,

EDW^D. BIRD.



THE
P R E F A C E
TO THE
R E A D E R.



THE Occasion of the ensuing Treatise, is, the Affection I have for several Young Men of my Acquaintance, who have lately imbib'd and drank in that Dangerous Principle of *Absolute and Unconditional Election and Reprobation*. A Principle they were once Enemies to, but now pretend to Embrace, not so much upon *Reason and Judgment*, as upon greater Illumination.

I had several Debates with them, and did endeavour, according to that Judgment I had in their Cause, to prevent their first going over to those Principles.

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I have since read the Motives and Inducements written by One of them, as the *Grounds* of his Conversion, and which were handed about to make Converts of others: But finding the Whole to contradict the Scripture, and the Principles of the Church of *England*, which they profess themselves Members of, I thought something offer'd to them in a Way, wherein they might weigh the Argument *Quiet* and *Alone*, might be more serviceable to them, than any thing offer'd in a Personal Discourse; and prevent that Heat, and (very often) Breach of Charity which happens that Way between Disputants.

I must confess, I debated a-while within my self, which would be the most Prudent and Christian Course, whether to be Silent, and suffer them to make what *Profelytes* they could to their Cause; or to let those Well-meaning Persons see the Gulf of Absurdities into which some have, and others are in Danger of falling, while they stand hovering (as a learned Author says he once did) “ betwixt the Absoluteness of a Decree,
“ and the Liberty of a Will, like a trembling Needle between two Loadstones;
“ or rather, like a Man that is just learning to Walk the Rope, who so posseth his Body with his two Hands, that his continual Fear of falling down, is the only Means by which he stands.”

It hath often grieved me, to see so many *Young Persons* just entring upon a Religious Conversation, so unwarily to suck in such Dangerous Principles, which cannot in the least be pretended, to make them better *Men*, or better *Christians*, but may tend to make them *worse*: Therefore, a Concern for their Welfare, was the Motive that set me on Writing.

I do allow, that in many Cases, it is dangerous to Speak; but when the Consequence of Silence may do much more Harm, Speech then becomes exceeding necessary: For what a great Trouble would it be, to see *Truth* falling in the midst of the Streets, if there were none endeavouring to hold her up? *Jer.* 9. 3. From such Considerations as these, (and to set them right concerning me) I have offer'd to their Perusal, a Discourse according to my Faith, not grounded on the hidden Mysteries of God's *secret Will*, but from the clearest Expressions of God's *written Word*.

I believe them to be sincere, tho' mistaken Persons; and if after what I have said, they still continue in their *Errors*, I shall esteem them as Objects, not of my *Envy*, but *Pity*. I here point out to them those fatal Rocks, which sad Experience hath taught me, so many have been *shipwrack'd* on. I only endeavour to keep both them and my self from the Rock of Presumption, and the Gulf of Despair. And in order to steer as carefully
as

as I can between two such imminent Dangers, I have *collected* such Arguments, as may make a right Distinction between the Nature of God's Will, and the Condition of my own; that so my *Hope* may consist with my *Fear*. I dare not impute to *God* what is unworthy of *Him* to own; nor assume to my *self* what is peculiar to *Him* only. For I believe, that nothing *Evil* is to be imputed to God, and that all that Evil of Sin which dwelleth in me, or proceedeth from me, is not *His*, but entirely my *own*: And that all the Good which I do, proceedeth, not from any thing in my self, but that I receive it from the special Grace and Favour of Almighty God, who *worketh in me both to will and to do of his good Pleasure*, Phil. 2. 13.

“ But that God should decree without
 “ Omniscience, or be Omniscient without a
 “ Prescience or Knowledge of all Events, I
 “ cannot believe: Or, that God should have
 “ Prescience without Consideration, or Pre-
 “ determine, compel, and necessitate a Man
 “ to commit that Sin which he hateth and for-
 “ biddeth, and therefore forbiddeth because
 “ he hateth it: ” This is a Doctrine, I can
 by no Means subscribe to. For them to tell
 me, *That Christ died only for some Few Men*,
 when the Scripture saith, he *died for All*
Men; or, that he is only the *Propitiation*
 for the *Lesser Part of the World*, when the
 Scripture tells me, he *is the Propitiation for*
the Sins of the Whole World; or, that he who
 giveth

giveth his Commands to *All*, is secretly unwilling to be Obeyed by *All*; when the Scripture openly professeth, that He is *willing*, nay, and requireth *All* to Obey him, upon Pain of Damnation. I say, for them, or ev'n Persons far superior to them, both for Skill and Learning, to tell me such Things, I can no more believe, than that Twice Three makes Eleven, or that it is but a Furlong from *York* to *London*.

And how RIGID soever these Men have said I am, or may yet think me to be; I must tell them, It is my hearty Desire to be always RIGID against *Heresy* and *False Doctrine*, being what our most excellent *Church* teacheth us to pray every Day against.

It is the Honour of God, the Truth of our Holy Religion, which I aim at, in these following Papers. And as the *Church of England*, to her Honour be it spoken, makes neither Authority nor private Judgment, but *Evidence*, her Rule; so has she always allowed to her *Members* the *Word of God* to be read by them, and bids them search *That*, whether these Things be so or no; I do acknowledge my great Insufficiency for such a Search, and the Disproportion of my Faculties to undertake and manage the great Abstruseness of the Subject I have treated on: A Subject, which has employ'd the Pens of the most Judicious and Learned. But all that I endeavour in the following Discourse, is, to prevent my *own* and *others* Feet from slipping
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ing and to raise up *those* that are already down; and withal, to shew, that I have not imbib'd any *Principles* either pernicious in themselves, or destructive to others; but have followed the Works of those worthy *Prelates* and *Pastors* of that *Church* whereof I have the Happiness to be a *Member*; many of whose *Opinions* I have produced in the following Tracts, and many more I might have produc'd, had I thought more would have been necessary to prove what I contend for, namely, " That the most High God hath
 " not appointed any Creature to do Wicked-
 " ly, but hateth Sin with an unfeigned and
 " perfect Hatred. That God doth not give
 " a Necessity to all Events, but to those on-
 " ly as are agreeable to his Holiness; these
 " being only the Objects of his Absolute and
 " Unconditional Decree. That God's De-
 " cree of *Reprobation* was Eternally Respe-
 " ctive; and *Respective* of Sins, as well *Actual*
 " as *Original*. That God's Decree of Election
 " was Eternally Respective of our being in
 " *Christ*, and of our *abiding in him unto the*
 " *End*. That Jesus Christ is a General,
 " but a Conditional *Saviour*; a *Saviour* to All
 " that Obey his Commands; to None, with-
 " out it. That they who stand, may fall
 " for ever, and must therefore very watch-
 " fully *take heed lest they fall*, 2 Pet. 1. 10.
 " Hebr. 12. 15. 1 Cor. 10. 12. Ever giving
 " all Diligence to make their Calling and E-
 " lection sure. " These, I say, are the Do-
 strines

Erines I contend for : And for these, I do chuse to hazard some Loss of Time, as well as Labour, to rescue the Lives and Conversations of certain Seduced and Mistaken Persons, whom the contrary Opinions are wont to carry into Lewd Practices.

And tho' it must be acknowledg'd with Joy and Comfort, that through the Grace and Mercy of our God, many Men have been preserved from putting in *Practice*, what those Errors of *Judgment* seem too naturally to expose, and tempt them to : Yet, when I consider seriously, how *Few* there are, and what Multitudes of People make the Result of their *Principles*, the Spring and Motion of their *Actions*, ascribing to *God's Decree*, their blackest and most frightful Deeds, and so running to Hell, upon a Belief that they are shut out of Heaven by a peremptory Decree; or else affirming, *That God sees no Sin in his Elected Ones*; or, that a Man is never a *true Saint*, 'till he has had a *sound Fall*, such as *David's* with *Bathsheba*; " and that (as " *Mr. Baxter* has said) it is exceeding hard " to determine, how many, great, and long " the Sins of a true Believer may be; and " that (a) *Hell-falls of Sins cannot separate " us from Christ*;" affirming, that *St. Paul*, *Rom. 7.* spake of himself, and did not personate an Unregenerate Person, when he said, *he did those Sins which he did not allow of, &c.*

(a) *Mr. Rutherford's Letters.*

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and so making the Height of Carnality consistent with a State of Grace; and making God either the *Author, Commander, Counsellor, or Adviser* in Evil; ascribing their Sins, not to the Passive Permission or Forbearance only, but to the Active Providence and Absolute Decrees of Almighty God, *who is of purer Eyes than to behold Evil, and cannot look on Iniquity*, Hab. 1. 13. I say, when I see and hear these Things, it is from hence I think it the Duty of every Christian, (as far as in him lies) to vindicate the Glory and Honour of his *Creator*, where-ever he finds it traduced and vilified with the foulest Slanders and blackest Enormities; and so free his own Soul, whatsoever Influence he may have on others, *Ezek. 3. 19. Levit. 19. 17. Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy Neighbour, and not suffer Sin upon him.*

And if the Steps I have taken, are thought to be *wrong*, by those *that think themselves only in the right*, they can conclude no worse of me, than that I am not Infallible. And this I must tell them, that if I *Err*, it is not for want of a Willingness to *Learn*, but for want of a Confutation of those *Reasons and Arguments*, which have render'd me, and thousands of thousands which have thought, and do still think as I do, *invincibly Ignorant*. Therefore, I hope I shall not severely be censured, for being every whit as dull as other People, who have larger Abilities, more Time,
and

and of greater Penetration than ever I could boast of, and yet (as I said) Believe just as I do.

But however, this one Favour I beg, that whatever Faults I may seem, by *some Persons*, to be guilty of, they would lay them on my *Person*, rather than impute them to my *Cause*. And may they who hate me most for what I have done, be profited most by my Endeavours: Therefore whatever some Men may plead against me, in Revenge for my having pleaded for God himself, (pardon the Expression,) however I may be fullied by some Men, and esteemed by them of a foul Complexion, yet I will *possess my Soul in Patience*; nay, I will endeavour to take some Pleasure in those Afflictions, tho' never so *foully* cast upon me, meerly for proving, That God is *Pure*; That he cannot endure to behold *Iniquity*; That he cannot away with it; That his Soul doth hate it; That 'tis a Trouble unto him; That he is weary to bear it; That he will rather have us Die, or be temporally Undone, than commit it in the least measure; seeing we are able to avoid it, thro' him that *strengthens us*. See *Psal. 145. 7. Hebr. 1. 13. Isa. 1. 13. Mat. 10. 28. Rom. 3. 8. Phil. 4. 13.* These are Truths, which, in my shallow Judgment, ought faithfully to be embraced by every one that calls himself a Disciple of Christ: I say, in my shallow Judgment; which because it is shallow, I submit to
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those of deeper and profounder Penetration.

For I do believe, it is a less Evil to ascribe unto the Devil, some good Works of God, than to charge God foolishly with the Evil Works of the Devil. It is abominable Wickedness in Men, to be False-witnesses against God; but sure, it is a Sin of the highest magnitude, to wrest and corrupt his *Sacred Word*, and make him bear False-witness against *Himself*. Who could think, that such Impieties as these, should ever be embraced for *Soul-saving Doctrine*? or, that Persons possess'd with such abominable Principles, should call themselves the *Godly*, the *Saints*, the *Elect*, and *chosen Vessels* of God? Certain I am, that Blasphemy is not the less so, for being found in the *Works*, and professed by the *Mouths* of some *Christians*, any more than *Pontius Pilate* can be said to be a better Man, because his *Name* stands in the *Apostles Creed*.

And how great is that Blasphemy that ascribes to God (as the Principal *Cause* or *Contriver*) the very worst and blackest of Deeds that can possibly be imagined! For that must needs be the worst and blackest, which is the very worst Thing in the *Devil* himself; the *Devil* having nothing worse in him, *than a Necessity of Sinning*, or an *Impossibility to abstain from Sin*.

There-

Therefore, to say that God Almighty did Eternally *cause* or *contrive*, *decree* or *predestine* a *Necessity of Sinning* in a great part of the Angels, and in the greatest part of Mankind; is the greatest Blasphemy to be imagined.

From hence, I esteem it to be the Duty and Privilege of every one to oppose those Tenets, which bring Dishonour to God, and a Scandal to Religion.

Neither ought any Christian, who is confident of the Goodness of his Faith, to fear its being try'd by any Touch-stone. " True Religion is not a Thing gilded over, but Gold it self; the more that's scraped and discovered, the brighter and goodlier it is. " The *Jew* is loth to reason with the *Christian* touching *his Law*; and the *Turk* is forbid to dispute of *his Alcoran*; because their Religions are brittle like Glass, broken with the least Touch. But the *Christian Religion* is not so: Her Truths have been more Illustrated and set forth, by being call'd in question by her Adversaries, than ever their Silence could have done. " Let us not fear, " (saith a certain Author) lest our Faith, " when it is laid open, appear filthy to the Eyes of the Beholders. Let false and superficial Religions, in which there is no Soundness, be afraid of this. "

But I must remember, I am writing a Preface: Therefore, all that I crave in Behalf

of the following Papers, is, That they may be no otherwise attended to, than as they bring *Truth* and *Evidence* along with them. And how inconsiderable soever I may justly be esteem'd to be, or any thing that I can say on such a Subject as this; yet, if it should come into the Hands of any, who value themselves on their *Sincerity*, with Regard to the contrary Principles, I only beg of them, to read without *Partiality* and *Prejudice*; and that none may be so far wanting to themselves, in a Matter of such vast Consequence, in which their Eternal Salvation is concern'd, as to slight and despise the Evidence of *Truth*, tho' the Author, in their Eyes, seem never so mean and contemptible.

I have used the greatest Plainness imaginable; my Design being not to *Confound*, but to *Convert* those that are *already Fallen*, and to Strengthen those that *Stand*.

The Work has much increased on my Hand, beyond what I at first design'd: And therefore, to avoid the Tedioufness of one continued Discourse, and to render the Reader's Perusal as pleasant and easy as possible, I have divided it into several *Parts*, and furnish'd each with such Variety of Arguments, as may be agreeable to his Fancy, give him a Breathing-time, and make a greater Impression on his Judgment.

The

The true End of *Reading*, is *Improvement* :
And he that sincerely desires to be really be-
nefitted by what he reads, will take Care
to digest it in his Thoughts, and then re-
duce it to Practice, and try to get his Life
Amended by it.

I shall Conclude all, in the Words of our
most excellent *Litany*, *That it may please*
God to bring into the Way of Truth all such
as have erred and are deceived. Amen.

EDW^D. BIRD.

DEPTFORD,
Nov. 17th,
1725.



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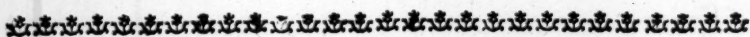


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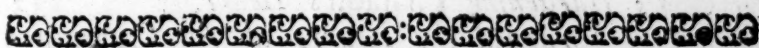


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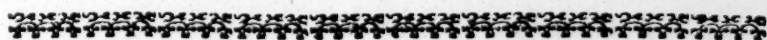




THE
Horrid Decree
 OF
 Absolute and Unconditional
ELECTION
 AND
REPROBATION,
 Fully Detected, &c.



CONFERENCE I.



Eutychus.



Good Morrow to you, Sir; I'm heartily glad to see you: but may I take the freedom to ask, what earnest Business makes you in such haste this Morning, and especially so early?

Epenetus. Sir, Yesterday a Person brought me word, that one of my Tickets in the present
 B State;

State-Lottery, was drawn against a Prize of 1000*l*. and it being but doubtful News, I'm going to *London*, to search the Books, whether there be any Certainty in it: For the Thought of such a Prize hath so transported me, that (if you'll believe me) I could not sleep two Hours last Night, for ruminating upon it; yet I'm willing to be sure of the Truth, lest it make too deep an Impression upon me; and the Thoughts of being deceived, should torment me, as much as the Certainty of it, may rejoyce me.

Eutychus. I cannot blame you for your sudden Joy at such Information; but if the News be true, as I hope it is, yet a Man's Life consists not *in the abundance of Things which he possesseth*, as our Saviour observes. And indeed, how welcome would you have been to me, and what a happy Hour should I have esteemed it, to have met with one that should have told me, that his Sins were such a Burden to him, and his Wickedness so affrighted him, *that they would not suffer his Eyes to slumber, neither the Temples of his Head to take any rest*; and that this Morning he was very solicitous how *to make his Calling and Election sure*. Here is the Inheritance worth the purchasing; this is worth our Daily Travel, and our Morning Thoughts, yea, and our Night Watches too.

Epenetus. My Dear Friend, I must submit my Sense and Judgment to the Power of your Reason: But, Sir, give me leave to tell you, that the best of us are apt, sometimes, to be too solicitous for the Things of this World: And tho' our Saviour has indeed told us, That they that *have Riches, shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*; yet He has not told us, it is impossible. I will not go about to justify my self in all Particulars; I confess, and desire to do it, with Shame and true Compunction of Soul, that I have been a great Sinner, tho'

Reprobation, fully Detected.

3

tho', I thank my God, I have made it my study, through the whole Course of my Life, to forsake my Sins, and to live in the Practice of the contrary Virtues, relying upon God, through Christ, for the Pardon of my Sins, and Ability to reform and amend; yet not so exactly, but that after all the Care I have hitherto taken, I must acknowledge, that I have Business enough still to do, in order to the trimming my Lamp, and fitting my self for my Lord's Appearance, that I may be found one of those whom He will accept at his Coming.

Eutychus. Alas, Poor Man! I must confess, I like your Discourse concerning your relying upon Christ, for the Pardon of your Sins; but, I pray, what can we poor impotent Creatures do, in order to trim our Lamps, and fit our selves for Heaven? For the Apostle Paul tells us, *Eph. 2. 8. By Grace ye are saved, through Faith; and that not of your selves: it is the Gift of God:* and ver. 9. *Not of Works, lest any Man should boast.* And I have learn'd, that (a) "In the Covenant betwixt Christ and His, there is no more for Man to do, but "only to know and believe, that Christ hath done all for him;" so that I am afraid you are still carnal, and that you never felt the sweet Influence of Christ's Spirit working irresistibly upon your Soul.

Epenetus. I confess, I am not able to tell you the Text, nor the Sermon, neither the Day, nor the Hour, much less the Minute, in which I was effectually called: Yet, I hope, that I am in a state of Grace, and that I have been Obedient to the Call of God; tho' I cannot tell the Hour and Minute (as I said before) when such irresistible Conversion was wrought upon my Soul.

(a) *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, pag. 119. Edit. 3.

Eutychus. If you never felt the Divine Impulse of God's Grace working irresistibly upon your Soul, I much doubt of your Conversion; for a Natural Man, dead in Trespases and Sins, is not able, by his own Strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.

Epenetus. Sir, I perceive, by your Discourse, that you come very nigh the Doctrine of Absolute and Inevitable Election and Reprobation.

Eutychus. Why, to give you my Opinion freely, and as briefly as I can, I do believe, (a) " That Election is the Eternal Decree of God, whereby he freely and infallibly appointed, for the Glory of his own Name, to bring some Men to Everlasting Life, through Christ. "

Epenetus. But what do you take to be the Moving Cause of this Election?

Eutychus. (b) " Neither foreseen Faith, Works, Freedom of Will, Nobleness of Birth, nor Merit of Christ, but only the good Pleasure of God. "

Epenetus. I can by no means concur in your Opinion; because, the Reason of Man's Salvation, in Scripture, is not said to be given barely from the Will of God, but from the Faith and Obedience of Men; for it is an Act of Rewarding Justice, as well as Paternal Love and Mercy; and therefore we must distinguish very nicely between the Decree of God, and the Execution of it. For if Unbelievers, Disobedient, and Rebellious Persons be chosen to Salvation, and it is not in God's Power to revoke that Election, (as is concluded by some) I can see no Necessity of Faith and Obedience; for if God chuseth us to Salvation, that is, if He wills to save us, being Disobedient, having no Regard to

(a) *Fiery Pillar*, pag. 7. Edit. 10.

(b) *Ibid.* pag. 7.

Reprobation, fully Detected. 5

Faith, Works, &c. what Reason can you assign, why he should not be able to make us Partakers of Salvation, being Disobedient? Is not Election the Decree of Saving? And doth not God execute his Decree, for the same Reason for which he made it? If so, why can he not actually save us, without Faith and Obedience, as well as Decree or Will to save us without them?

Eutychus. He decrees to save us, merely for his good Pleasure; but he will actually save us, in a Way of Justice mingled with Mercy; and therefore he hath chosen us (a) "in Christ; now *he that is in Christ, is a new Creature.*"

Epenetus. If so, then the Decree, and the Execution of the Decree, are inconsistent one with the other; for you said above, that neither foreseen Faith, Works, nor Merits of Christ were the Cause of Election; and now you crudely affirm, That God hath chosen us in Christ; adding, that *he that is in Christ, is a New Creature*: which plainly implies, that the Object of God's Election, are the Faithful and Holy.

Eutychus. I deny that; for my Belief is, that God carrieth himself absolutely throughout, according to the meer Pleasure of his Will; without considering any thing in Man, but giving Faith and Repentance to some, and denying them to others, of his own good Pleasure, without any thing foreseen in Man.

Epenetus. Then I perceive your Opinion is, that God (b) "hath Rejected some, as well as *"Elected others?"*"

Eutychus. Yes.

Epenetus. What do you take to be the Moving Cause thereof?

(a) *Eph. 1. 4. 2 Cor. 5. 17.*

(b) *Fiery Pillar, pag. 7.*

Eutychus. (a) The good Pleasure of God.

Epenetus. Then it is in vain to take any Pains to be Religious; for if Men be ordained to Destruction, it will be to no purpose to strive, for they shall lose all their Labour; but if they are ordained to Salvation, tho' they live never so wickedly, it cannot prejudice their Salvation, for they must come to their appointed End.

Eutychus. But God has commanded us to use Means; and such Commands are Encouragements, that God will not deny Men the End and Blessing to Them that use the Means as well as they can.

Epenetus. But still, Sir, this does not remove the Stumbling-block out of my Way. For Men of your Persuasion tell us, that these Blessings are really given to none but the Elect: (b) "As for the Reprobates, all
" the Water of Life runs quite beside their Mill;
" all Gifts whatsoever are unprofitable to them:
" And the Congregational Churches, do, in their
" Declaration, tell the World; (c) That they who
" are not Elected, altho' they may be called by the
" Ministry of the Word, and may have some com-
" mon Operations of the Spirit; yet, not being ef-
" fectually drawn by the Father, they neither do,
" nor can come to Christ, and therefore cannot be
" saved."

Eutychus. I must confess, that I don't think it possible for a (d) "Reprobate to live a Godly Life,
" or an Elect Person to live always Lewdly and
" Loosely; for the same God that ordains the End,
" ordains the Means.

Epenetus. Sir, you have abundantly confirmed what I have have endeavour'd to prove you guilty

(a) *Fiery Pillar*, p. 7.

(b) *Mr. Norton's Orthod. Evan.* pag. 164.

(c) *Declaration*, chap. 10. n. 4. pag. 8, 9.

(d) *Mr. Dyke, in Mystery of Self-deceiving*, pag. 245.

of, namely, the rendring fruitless all Endeavours either to obtain Life, or avoid Destruction. For who, but a Fool or a Madman, will trouble his Brain, or spend his Labour about Impossibilities? Now, if God gives a Man Power to do his Duty, then his Commands for Obeying are possible to be comply'd with; but if God gives us no Ability, either by with-holding his Talents, or not allowing Time or Opportunity to improve them, I cannot see how God can be said to *render to every Man according to his Work*. Neither can I think, that God would commit to my Trust and Stewardship Talents of Silver, and then expect that I should turn them into Talents of Gold. He knows his poor Creature hath no Philosopher's-Stone of such Virtue; he expects but an Improvement in the same kind of Talents: for you may as reasonably expect that a Man may beget an Angel, as that he should turn from Vice to Virtue, if he be a Reprobate, in Your Sence of that Word. For, how unreasonable is it to expect a Machine to act above the Sphere of its Activity? Will you expect a Watch should go twenty four Hours, when the Spring was made to go but twelve? or that a Gun should carry a thousand Yards, when the Charge that was given it will carry but five hundred? no more can it be thought that any Man can flie an Eagle's Pitch with Bats Wings. But these are and must be the Consequences of your Doctrine, which saith, That (a) "Restraining and
"Renewing Grace, differ in their Cause, Effect,
"and Extent: 1st, In their Moving Cause, Renew-
"ing Grace cometh from the special Love of God;
"but Restraining Grace (which is common to
"the Reprobates as well as the Elect) proceedeth

(a) *Fiery Pillar*, p. 72, 73.

“ from the general Mercy of God. *2dly*, In their
 “ Effect ; Renewing Grace changeth the Nature of
 “ Man, mortifieth and destroyeth Sin, and makes a
 “ Man new throughout ; Restraining Grace doth on-
 “ ly inhibit the Exercise of Sin, working no real and
 “ gracious Change in Man. *3dly*, In their Extent ;
 “ Restraining Grace is common to Good and Bad ;
 “ Renewing Grace is proper to the Elect effectual-
 “ ly called ; Restraining Grace keeps a Man back
 “ from Sin for a season ; Renewing Grace so keeps
 “ Man, that he returns no more to Sin. ”

Eutychus. Sir, I believe there is a vast differ-
 ence between Saving, and Common Grace: For I
 believe, (a) “ I may have a Notional Knowledge of
 “ Christ, and the Necessity of his Blood, and of
 “ the Excellency of Salvation, and yet perish ; I
 “ may weep at the History of his Passion, when
 “ I read how he was used by the *Jews*, and
 “ yet perish ; I may come desirously to his Word
 “ and Ordinances, and yet perish ; ——— I may
 “ obey him in many Things, ——— escape much
 “ of the Pollutions of the World, by his Know-
 “ ledge, and yet Perish ; I may suffer much, and
 “ lose much for him, some parts of my Plea-
 “ sures and Profits I may part with, in hopes of
 “ Salvation, and yet perish ; I may be esteemed
 “ by others, a Man zealous for Christ, and be
 “ loved and admir’d upon that account, and yet
 “ perish ; I may be a zealous Preacher of Christ
 “ and Salvation, and reprove others for their Neg-
 “ lect of both, and lament the Sin of the World
 “ with most bitter and passionate Expressions, and
 “ yet perish ; I may verily think that I set more
 “ by Christ and Salvation, than by any thing else
 “ whatsoever, and yet be mistaken, and perish

(a) Mr. Baxter's Sermon, of making light of Christ, pag.
 55, 56.

“everlastingly. Again, (a) By Common Grace, a Man may not only know, but love God also; and love him as Merciful and Gracious, as better than the Creature, as best for him; yea, he may love God, under the Notion of the chiefest Good, and most desirable End, in whose Sight and Fruition everlasting Happiness consisteth; and by Common Grace, he may believe in Christ, or desire him as a Saviour, to free him from every Sin, and from Sin as Sin, or as it is against God, and yet perish.”

Epenetus. If the Case be so, I pray, what can a Regenerate Man do more? And how is it possible to form a right Distinction between Saving, and Common Grace? All this would be but cold Comfort to a disconsolate Soul, to tell him (or indeed, any one else) that he may love God, believe in Christ; and that, tho’ Belief and Love are real Acts, and physically true, and have a Being, yet they are morally defective and insincere; not the same Things which have the Promises made to them in the Gospel; and consequently, are no Evidences of Spiritual Life in the Soul. And *Mr. Baxter* says, (b) “It is extream hard to determine how great, many, or long the Sins of a true Believer may be;” [which, by the way, is very repugnant to what he offer’d just now, as Marks to shew how far a wicked Man might go in Goodness;] and if those Sins be Murder, and Adultery, or the like, and long continued in, shall that Believer be certain still of his Election? Shall he not rather suspect it was Common Grace that wrought him to that Belief? I am sure, he hath

(a) See *Mr. Baxter’s* additional Sheet at the end of his *Treatise of Saving Faith*.

(b) *Mr. Baxter’s Dispute of Right to the Sacrament*, Dispute 3. pag. 337.

reason enough to suspect it, according to your former Discourse, unless he add Presumption to his other Crimes: So that, upon the whole Matter, without a special Revelation, a Man cannot be sure of his Election 'till the Day of his Death, because he knows not what Temptation he may fall into, nor how he may demean himself under it. By which it is plain, that your Principles are nothing but a System of Contradictions. For do but consider, *First*, You say, a Man may love God, believe in Christ, escape many Pollutions of this World, bewail the Sins of it with most passionate Expressions; yea, may think, he sets more by Christ and his own Salvation, than by the whole World it self, and yet all this may be the Effect of Common Grace only, and he a Reprobate. And presently, Men of your Way tell us, That it is very hard to determine how great, many, or long, the Sins of an Elected Person (endued with Saving Grace) may be.

Eutychus. Pray, Sir, since you seem so very Earnest, let me ask you one Question: Do you believe, that all the Good which a Man does, comes from the special Grace and Favour of God, *who freely worketh in us both to will and to do, of his good pleasure?* Phil. 2. 13.

Epenetus. I do firmly believe it: But then I believe also, That all the Evil of Sin, which dwelleth in me, or proceedeth from me, is not imputable to God's Will, but entirely to mine own. I believe also, That no Man can come to Christ, unless it be *given him*, (that is, unless the Father *draw him* :) For, first, the Father loves the Son; next, he loves us in the Son; then, he endows us with his Spirit: so endowed, he elects us; so elected, he predestines us; so predestin'd, he will glorify us, by crowning his Gifts and Graces in us. *His Graces*, I say; because not acquired by Us, but infused by Him; nor so

so properly given, as lent us: lent us as Talents, not to hide, but to multiply. So that we owe it wholly to God; not that he gives us his Grace only, but, that he gives us Grace to desire his Grace, as well as to use it to the advancement of his Glory; and we are to thank him, as for all other Mercies, so for this also, ev'n that we have the Grace to thank him. This I always desire to believe, that as we cannot spiritually be nourish'd, unless the Father of Mercies doth reach out unto us the Bread of Heaven; and that we cannot take it, when offer'd, unless he give us the Hand of Faith: so cannot we possibly desire to take it, unless he give us our very Appetite and Hunger; we cannot pant after the Waters of Life, unless he give us our very Thirst. I believe that there is no good Thought arising in us, which is not suggested by his Preventing Grace, *Phil.* 1. 6. & 2. 13. no, nor encreasing in us, unless strengthned by his subsequent Grace, *Luke* 19. 13, 26. no, nor consummate in us, unless perfected by his Grace of Perseverance, *1 Cor.* 15. 10. That, if I am better than any Man, it is God that makes me differ, *1 Cor.* 4. 7. *Jam.* 1. 17. *1 Cor.* 1. 31. *Psal.* 115. 1. That every good Gift is from Above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights. And therefore, he that will glory, let him glory in the Lord; saying, with the Psalmist, Not unto Us, O Lord, not unto Us, but unto thy Name give the Praise.

Eutychus. I am very glad to see you so Calm again; for now I hope you will allow, that God's working upon the Wills of his Ele&t is by such a physical immediate change of the Will, as doth not only produce a certain, but a necessary Effect?

Epenetus. By no means; for I do not think, that the working of Grace upon the Will, doth take away the Liberty of the Will. Grace doth correct, but not destroy. Grace doth strengthen, but

but not compel. Grace doth guide, but not necessitate. Grace makes Men able to chuse Good, but not unable to refuse it. For, if it were not so, Man would not be a Voluntary, but a Necessary Agent: And when we take from Man the Qualities peculiar to him, as Man, we make him unfit to be an Object of Rewards and Punishments. Therefore, I think it a great Absurdity, to say, that a Man is forced by God Almighty to be Happy: And I have read, in Mr. *Baxter's Call to the Unconverted*, That he was at last of Opinion, That that there was no carrying Madmen to Heaven in Fetters, whether they wou'd, or no. But if I am not too tedious, I will endeavour to give some light to the Matter in hand, out of some clear Passages in Scripture; and, in my weak Opinion, there is none more pertinent, than that of St. Paul to the *Philippians*, chap. 2. 12, 13. *Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* Observe, 1st, He bids them *work*, because God *worketh*; which they need not have been bid to do, if God had *work'd* after an irresistible manner. 2^{dly}, That they might not be betrayed into a yawning Expectation of their being acted upon, or their Salvation, in a manner, brought about for them, whether they wou'd or no; he bids them *work it out with fear and trembling*; (as our Saviour bids us *strive to enter in at the strait gate; because many shall strive, and shall not enter:*) which they needed not to have done, had their Salvation been (not only certain, but withal) a necessary unavoidable thing, and so inconsistent with Choice and Option. 3^{dly}, The Apostle tells them, (in the next Verse) that *it is God which worketh in them*, not only *to do*, but, *to will, and to do*: By his Preventing Grace, he worketh in them *to will*; by his

Assisting

Assisting Grace, he worketh in them *to do*: by neither so irresistibly, but that they must work it out themselves too; and that not only by Expectation and Hope, but *with fear and trembling*. God worketh in us *to will*, (saith the Apostle;) not without, or against, but according to the nature of that very Will with which he made us. Grace doth not destroy, but establish, strengthen, and perfect Nature. Shall we say we do a thing without Liberty and Choice, because *God worketh in us to will, and to do*? Is the Liberty lost, because it is guided and enabled to do that which is Good? If *I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me*; then I can (through him) both refuse the Evil, and chuse the Good. Which would not be Choice, if it were, whether I would or no.

Eurychus. But does not the same Apostle tell us, *Eph. i. 11*. That *God worketh all things after the counsel of his will*?

Epenetus. I do not take that Place to mean, That God destroys, or takes away our Wills, by the working of his own; the Place will not bear that Construction: For the Apostle speaks it of God's Election, which he predestin'd in his Son, and the Means conducing to such an End, which are none but Good; not at all of Reprobation, the Means in order to which are none but Evil. For the words, [*he worketh all things,*] are infinitely far from being meant either of Sin, or Reprobation; so far from that, that I believe God does not permit Sin, as Permission signifies Connivance or Consent; but that he permits it so, as that signifies, [not to hinder by main Force.] To make it plain, by a Comparison: If I see a Man Robbing my Neighbour, and say nothing to him; I so permit, as to be guilty: but if I warn and exhort, if I promise and threaten, and do all I can to hinder him (without killing him,) I so permit, as to be innocent. And is not the Case
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the same in God's Permission? Does not he warn, exhort, beseech, invite, yea and threaten too? yet he suffers us to live, and have that Nature of the Will with which he made us? Whereas, to destroy us for the prevention of Sin, and to take away our Option of Good or Evil, and so make us to become like Stocks or Stones, or wooden Engines which are moved only by Wires, at the meer discretion or pleasure of the Engineer; were, by inevitable Consequence, to unmake his Creature: *I can do all things, through Christ that strengthens me*, (saith the Apostle.) Now, I pray observe, to *strengthen* is not to *necessitate*; for then, to strengthen, would be to weaken: because to necessitate or compel with an Irresistibility, is to vanquish and over-master; not to give Strength, but to take it away; for that is called Irresistible, which is of such an over-ruling Power and prevailing Force, that a Man cannot withstand it, although he would. And dare we charge God with exercising such Power on the Wills of the Reprobates, in order to bring them to Destruction? God forbid: He doth not only offer, and propose to his Peoples choice, but desires them also to chuse: *I call Heaven and Earth to record this day against you*, (saith God, by Moses) *that I have set before you Life and Death, Blessing and Cursing; Therefore, chuse Life, that thou and thy seed may live*. But we may as well discern Colours without Eyes, walk without Legs, speak when we were born dumb; as chuse, if God works in us irresistibly. Which is plain by Reason: For, to chuse irresistibly, is a Contradiction *in adjecto*: For it is to will a thing whether one will or no. He that saith, God worketh in us to chuse irresistibly, doth in effect say, He so worketh in us, that we cannot chuse but chuse; which is as much as to say, not only that we do what we cannot do, but that we therefore do it, because we cannot do it. He that cannot
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chuse but chuse, doth chuse because he cannot chuse; which is as bad as to say, that the thing is necessary, because it is impossible. To make this plain to the meanest Capacity, we need only consider these Particulars: 1st, He that is wrought upon by God to believe, obey, or persevere irresistibly, cannot possibly do otherwise than believe, obey, and persevere. 2^{dly}, He that cannot possibly do otherwise than he doth, cannot possibly chuse but do what he doth. 3^{dly}, He that cannot chuse but do what he doth, doth clearly do it, whether he will or no. 4^{thly}, He that doth believe, obey, or persevere, whether he will or no, doth do it by as evident undeniable Necessity, as that, by which a Stone tends downwards; which tendency of the Stone, tho' it is spontaneous, yet it is not Voluntary; and as it is not by Violence, so it is not by Choice neither. 5^{thly}, He that willeth to believe, obey, or persevere, whether he will or no, doth it by a Necessity, by which a Stone tends upwards, when it is thrown; which tendency of the Stone is so far from Voluntary, that it is not spontaneous; it is not only an irrational, but an unnatural thing, and implies a Contradiction in a Voluntary Agent, which cannot take place in an Involuntary Stone. For to say, a Man willeth to obey or believe, whether he will or no, is to say, he willeth it either without his Will, or against his Will, or else not having a Will at all; which is as bad as to say, that he must needs will it, because he cannot any way possibly will it.

Eutychus. Indeed, I cannot see how to take off the Odium of these Absurdities, without denying your Definition of Irresistible, which were not to escape, but to change and contract more: Yet methinks your Opinion seems to patronize the proud Error concerning Free-will; for if God doth not

not necessitate our Actions, but leave them to our own Inclinations, so that is in our Power to work or not to work; does not this inter, that we have Freedom of Will to do, or not to do, just what our Fancy leads us to? contrary to what our Saviour saith, *John 15. 5. — without me you can do nothing.*

Epenetus. Nothing that is Good can be done without Christ: But I hope you will allow, we may do Evil without his Help and Assistance; for tho' we say, many Things are done Contingently in respect of God; yet many, we say, are done by God's special Determination. As for our Natural Actions, such as Eating, Drinking, Walking, &c. I believe that ordinarily we perform them freely and contingently, in respect of God. And I believe likewise, that good Duties, properly so called, are never performed without Choice and Freedom; which Freedom, tho' lost by *Adam*, I take to be one of those Privileges purchased again for us by Christ, and restored to us under the Gospel Dispensation, and so a necessary part of our Redemption. *If the Son make you free, then are you free indeed; and were the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty.* Indeed, were we left to our selves, our Wills are so crooked, and our Appetites so debauched, that we cannot but sin: But our Saviour has told us, *his Grace is sufficient for us:* He has trod down Satan, under our Feet, in order that we may trample upon him; and I cannot but observe, that tho' He tread him down with his own Feet, yet it is said to be trampled under Ours.

Eutyclus. Pray, Sir, saving your Discourse, let me ask you one Question. Do you not allow, that God's Foreknowledge of all Events, is most infallible and necessary?

Epenetus. Yes, I do allow it.

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Eutychus. Then all Events, in respect of Him, fall out necessarily ; otherwise, you must allow, it is possible for God to be deceived : yea, if many things fall out Contingently, or as it were by Accident, God's Foreknowledge of them can be but Contingent, depending, after a sort, on Man's Free-Will.

Epenetus. Your Objection seems plausible at first view, but I hope I shall give you a full Answer. I know that it is said, God's Prescience succeeds his Preordination, by Men of your Principles, and therefore (say they) must give a Necessity to all Events: Now you must allow, it is one thing, to know a Thing will Necessarily be done, and another, to know Necessarily that a Thing will be done. God doth necessarily and certainly foreknow all that will be done ; but he doth not know, that those Things which shall be done Voluntarily, will be done Necessarily : He knoweth that they will be done ; but he knoweth withal, that they might have fallen out otherwise, for ought He had order'd to the contrary. So likewise, God knew that *Adam* would fall, and yet he knew that he would not fall necessarily ; for it was possible for him not to have fallen. And as touching God's Preordination going before his Prescience, and so the Cause of all Events : This would be, to make God the Author of all the Sin in the World ; his Knowledge comprehending that, as well as other Things. God, indeed, foreknoweth all Things, because they will be done ; but Things are not [therefore] done, because he foreknoweth them. The Infallibility of his Knowledge, consisteth not in the Immutability of his Decree, but in the Prerogative of his Deity : It is impossible therefore that any Man, by his voluntary manner of working, should delude God's Foresight ; but then, this Foresight doth not necessitate the Will to certain Effects ; for this were, to take it wholly
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away. For, as the Knowledge of Things present, doth import no necessity on that which is done; so, the Foreknowledge of Things future, lays no necessity on that which shall be: Because, whosoever knows and sees Things, he knows and sees them as they are, and not as they are not: So that God's Knowledge doth not confound Things, but reaches to all Events, not only which come to pass, but as they come to pass, whether Contingently, or Necessarily. As for Example: When you see a Man walking upon the Earth, and at the very same instant the Sun shining in the Heavens; Do you not see the first as Voluntary, and the second as Natural? And tho' at the instant you see both done, there is a Necessity that they be done, (or else you could not see them at all;) yet there was a Necessity of one only, before they were done, (namely, the Sun's shining in the Heavens;) but none at all of the other, (*viz.* the Man's walking upon the Earth.) The Sun could not but shine, as being a Natural Agent; the Man might not have walked, as being a Voluntary one.

Eutychus. But does not this Doctrine plainly contradict the Scripture? I'm sure our Saviour intimateth as much, when he told his Apostles, that *the very Hairs of their Head were all numbred, and that ev'n a poor contemptible Sparrow falls not to the Ground without his heavenly Father;* which evidently shews, that the pettiest Matters in the World are determined by God Himself.

Epenetus. I do grant, that ev'n a Sparrow cannot fall to the Ground, without God's Permission or Knowledge; but I don't think, from thence, that God hath made any special Decree concerning Sparrows. And the Scope and Meaning of our Saviour, in this Place, I take to be this, namely, the Comforting and Encouraging his Disciples, whom he was now sending abroad into the World

as *Sheep among Wolves*; and that if such Trifles as a *Hair*, and a *Sparrow* could not fall, without his Permission, how much reason they had to place their Confidence in God, who was their special Observer, and most loving Father; who, they might be sure, would never suffer any thing to befall them, but for his Glory, and their Good: so that you may see the Ground of your Mistake, by confounding Permission with Preordination. For whilst I hear a Man speak, it is necessary that he doth speak, but upon supposition that I hear him speaking, his Speech is still a Voluntary Contingent thing. For he spake when he pleased; and he might have been silent when he pleased; [but still with a Proviso of God's Permission. Indeed, whatsoever I do, there is an absolute Necessity that God should foresee; yet God foreseeing my voluntary Action, does not make it necessary, but on supposition that it is done. As for Example: We are now Discourfing, and God foresaw that we are Discourfing; yet it does not follow that we must needs Talk, for we can forbear, if we please. What God foresees, must necessarily come to pass, it must come to pass in the same manner that he foresees it. He foresaw that we will Dispute; not because we are necessitated thereto, but upon choice; so that his Foresight does not make an absolute and peremptory Necessity, but infers a Necessity upon Supposition: And there is a vast difference between the making, and inferring a Necessity; so that tho' God's Prescience is a Consequent of the Thing's coming to pass; yet its Infallibility of coming to pass, is inferred from his Prescience only by way of Consequence. What God foresees shall come to pass, shall infallibly come to pass, and that, because he cannot err, who is Omniscient. On the other side, what God decrees shall come

to pass, must come to pass of Necessity ; because He cannot be resisted, who is Omnipotent. Hence we may learn to distinguish between those Things, which have been so often and so unhappily confounded, namely, Sufficient, Effectual, and Irresistible Grace. 1st, Sufficient Grace, is that, which possibly *may* produce that Effect for which it was given. 2^{dly}, Effectual, is that which certainly *will*. 3^{dly}, Irresistible, is that which necessarily *must*. For that which is Irresistible, doth carry away its Object to what it pleaseth, like a mighty Torrent, by indisputable Force, maugres the greatest Opposition that can be made ; and therefore cannot take place in the Election of the Will ; which ceaseth to Elect after the nature of a Will, in case it be made to do any thing whether it will or no.

Eutychus. But I wou'd fain know how the Will can be said necessarily to chuse Good, when, without Grace, it is altogether insufficient to chuse any Good at all ? nay, ev'n not so much as think a good Thought ?

Epenetus. My Opinion is, That the Will, in this Case, is necessary, not as a Cause, but as a Condition : My meaning is, That we cannot do any thing that is Good, purely by virtue of our Wills, because our Will it self is given us from God ; but yet, without our Will, we cannot chuse at all. God's Grace alone is the Cause of the Good, but Man's Will is as really the Instrument of the Choice. We can do Good, as God's Engines, without a Will ; and so did *Balaam's* Ass, without the Gift of Reason : But we cannot chuse Good, without a Free-Will ; as that Ass could not possibly understand what she spake, without Ratiocination. To make it still more plain by an Illustration : We know the Sun is the Fountain or Cause of Light ; and Light, the only Means by which we see : but yet, the opening of the Eye-lid, is a necessary

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cessary Condition ; because if I wink, I am dark at Noon ; and if my Eye-lid is held open by Force, my Eye, in that case, cannot chuse but see, and therefore cannot chuse to see ; my Sight may be with Delectation, but not properly with that which is called Election. —

Eutychus. Pray, Sir, not too fast. If Man's Will hath such a Determining Power in the Operation of Good and Evil, how must we reconcile *Act. 4. 27, 28.* where it is said, that *Herod, Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were gathered together, for to do whatsoever God's hand and counsel determined before to be done ?*

Epenetus. With Submission, I take this place to mean no more than this ; That God determined not to hinder, what He foresaw Men wou'd do if they were not hinder'd. For if God had by his Power determined their Wills to the acting what they did, how could our Saviour have prayed for them, as *Sinners, Father, forgive them, &c.* if what they had done had not been voluntary, but of necessity ? And as to the Power of the Will, I believe that Man hath a Power to resist that Grace, which was sufficient in it self, and designed by God to work upon him for Conversion. But here I would not be mistaken : For in saying what I have said, I do not explicitly or implicitly deny, that God may (if he pleases) interpose his Power, and actually, and infallibly, and irresistibly convert him ; yet I find no Ground or Cause of thinking, that God ever did, or ever will thus Convert any one single Person : And therefore I think it very unsafe and unchristian, to teach Men to depend upon this Absolute Power, and so let slip those blessed and gracious Opportunities, which, by the Grace of God, may be embraced and made use of, and may cost us dear if they are not. For I dare not say, as Men of your Principles have

done, namely, "That Sin is absolutely willed by God
 " Almighty : That God did voluntarily decree it ;
 " That God doth determine it shall be done : That
 " God doth tempt Men to it," &c. And these
 Assertions they pretend to ground on such Texts
 as these, 1 Kings 22. 23, 24. where God saith to
 the *lying Spirit, Go forth and prevail* : Ezek. 14. 9.
 where God is said to have *deceived the Erring Pro-*
phet, &c. (which shall be further considered here-
 after.) In the mean while, how must we reconcile
 those Texts, if taken in their literal sense, with
 those which God intended we should understand
 literally ? such as, when God *sweareth he hath no*
Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked, Ezek. 33. 11.
 nor is *willing that any should perish, but that all*
should come to repentance, 2 Pet. 3. 9. and *will*
have all Men to be saved, 1 Tim. 2. 4. and *tasted*
death for every man, Hebr. 2. 9. and *is the Pro-*
pitiation, not for our Sins only, but also for the Sins
of the whole World, 1 John 2. 2. and *commandeth*
all men every-where to repent, Acts 17. 30. Can
 there be any Tricks or mental Reservations in these
 Words ?

Eutychus. I grant, that the Revealed Will of
 God, hath offered Salvation to all that will accept
 it ; but I do not think, from hence, that God in-
 tended they should accept it, because he hath de-
 creed the contrary ; the Revealed Will of God, be-
 ing not properly his Will, as that by which he
 decreeth a thing shall actually be done : It indeed
 (a) " sheweth (as I have learn'd) what ought to
 " be performed by us : Not that God hath,
 " in his secret Will, decreed we either can, or
 " shall be enabled to perform the same. So
 " that, when God revealeth his great Unwilling-

(a) *Fiery Pillar*, & c. pag. 17.

ness that Men should Sin, it is only a Sign that
 "Men ought not to Sin; not that they shall or
 "can avoid it."

Epenetus. If it be as you say, That God's Revealed Will, is, That all shou'd Repent; but his Secret Will, That very few shall: The Consequence is, That it is his Will, that his Will should *not* be done: and that when Reprobates say the *Lord's Prayer*, they only pray for their own Damnation, included in these Words, *Thy Will be done*: which makes one Will of God the same with that of the Devils. Nay, if God did absolutely decree the End, which is Damnation, and the Means conducing to that End, which is Final Impenitency, it would be the Reprobate's Duty; and so, consequently, ought to be his Prayer that he might be Damned: And endeavouring his Salvation, would be a Sin; because it were striving against the Stream of God's Absolute Will. If all Men are to chuse, and withal, to execute the Will of God, and that it is the Will of God that the greatest part should be damn'd; it will then be a Duty in the greatest part of Men, to go industriously to Hell; and to do Good, will be Vice, because it tends to carry Men to Heaven; and so the crossing an absolute, irrevocable Decree. But who dare entertain such Notions of the Most High GOD? who hath declared himself *a God of Mercy, forgiving Iniquity, Transgression, and Sin*, sincerely desiring the Happiness of all Mankind; I mean, their Repentance, Obedience, Holiness and Perseverance in this Life, and Eternal Happiness in the World to come: That *he hateth nothing that he hath made*, nothing but Sin, which he hath *not* made: That when he commands, he is sincerely willing to be obeyed, and therefore giveth a Passive Power to receive his Grace; and by that, an Active Power to perform such Obedience as he will mercifully accept. But, as I said

before, he forceth no Man, compelleth no Man, necessitateth no Man, by Grace irresistibile, to be eternally Happy, do he what he can to the contrary; any more than he necessitateth or forceth any Man, by any irrespctive unconditional Decree, to be eternally Miserable, do he what he can to be otherwise. So that such as are not saved, cannot say, they are not saved for want of Means and a Possibility, for want of a Ransom or a Saviour, or for want of God's Willingness that they should be saved; but, for want of their Willingness to do their Duties, the Conditions of the Covenant; upon the performance or non-performance of which, Salvation either may, or may not be had.

Eutyclus. I do readily grant, that the Death of Christ was sufficient to atone for the Sins of Ten Thousand Worlds; and I believe that Jesus is a Saviour of the Reprobates sufficiently, but not intentionally. I believe the least Drop of Christ's Blood, to be more valuable than the whole World: But yet I believe it was shed for a few Persons only, who were Elected from all Eternity, out of *Massa Corrupta*, and left the greater part of Men, who were (a) "eternally rejected or passed by in that corrupted Mass, to be utterly incapable of being saved by any part of his Merits." For indeed, how can Christ be said to *die for all*, when *all* are not saved? (b) "The Father did not chuse all, therefore neither did the Son die for and redeem all. For had Christ laid down his Life a Ransom for all Men, then the Justice of God being once satisfied, a second Punishment could not, without Injustice, be inflicted." *Mat.* 20, 28. *Isaiah* 53. 11, 12,

(a) *Fiery Pillar*, &c. pag. 9.

(b) *Ibid.* pag. 31.

Epenetus. Sir, I am not a little startled at your Opinion, which I think pernicious to the last degree, contradicting both Scripture and Reason, ev'n the clearest Scriptures that can be named; for I'm sure the Scripture sets forth Universal Redemption in the plainest manner that the Tongue of Men and Angels are able to express. 1st. By an Universal Collective, He *is the Saviour of all Men*, 1 Tim. 4. 10. 2^d. By an Universal Distributive, He *tasted death for every Man*, Hebr. 2. 9. 3^d. By an Universal Indefinite, not to a Part, but, He *is the Saviour of the World*, Joh. 4. 42. 4th. by an Universal Express. He *is the Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World*, 1 Joh. 2. 2. an Universal Subject; to one, as well as an other. 5th. By Universals Affirmative, as in those just mention'd, and many more. 6th. By Universals Negative, He *was not willing that any should perish*, 2 Pet. 3. 9. 7th. By an Universal Command to use the Means of Salvation, and that Universal to Places, as well as Persons; not to all Men in some Places, nor to some Men in all Places, but, He *commandeth all Men every where to Repent*, Act. 17. 30. From all which, I observe, That an Universal Creation is not asserted to us, by Scripture, in so great a variety of plain Expressions, as an Universal Redemption is found to be. But in your Objection, you charge God with mental Reservations, when he tells us he is not willing that *any should perish*, but, on the contrary, *that all should come to Repentance* 2. Pet. 3. 9. You say, his Decree from all Eternity, is, That he is willing that almost all the World should Perish, and very few come to Repentance. But if the Holy Ghost shall be affirmed not to intend what he speaketh, in those plain Places of Scripture where he saith, *all Men*, and *every Man*, *the World*, and *the whole World*, *not only*, *but also*, *not willing that any*, *but willing that all*, &c.

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How may a Man be taught to Disbelieve him in all other Places and Affirmations, where his Expressions are not so plain? How can a Man learn any one Duty, or refrain from any one Sin, upon any Motives in Scripture, if the most plain Passages are so liable [by certain Tricks and Distinctions] to be eluded, and made to speak what was never intended? If a Man will pretend to hold, by Scripture, [that Christ died only for the Elect] for which there is not one word in Scripture; How much greater Reason hath the *Arian* for his Heresy, from the plain letter of the Text, [*My Father is greater than I*, Joh. 14. 28.] or the *Papist*, upon his better Pretensions, [*This is my Body*?] Mat. 26. 6. I will ask you one Question: Pray, Sir, When Christ is said to be *the Saviour of the World*; (and more emphatically) *the Lamb of God, that taketh away the Sins of the World*; whether it be meant of the Whole, or of a Part only?

Eutychus. I believe, that it was in Part only, *he gave his Life a Ransom for many*, Mat. 20. 28.

Epenetus. How flatly do you now contradict the Apostle, 1 Joh. 2. 2. where, *to the World*, he addeth [*whole*?] And if Whole, it must signifie the major Part, both according to the Maxim which is in every Man's Logick, That the *Whole*, is greater than a *Part*. And because it is ever so used in Scripture, 1 Joh. 2. 2. Now then, you must confess that the Reprobates make up the major Part, and by consequence, that Christ is the Saviour only of the Reprobates; which abominable Absurdity you cannot possibly escape, but by a full Confession of Universal Redemption.

Eutychus. I do allow that Christ died for every Man in the World sufficiently, but not intentionally, (as I said before.)

Epenetus. Now you have betrayed your Cause worse than before. For, I pray you, how will you

you make it appear that our Saviour died ev'n sufficiently for all Men, when you said above, Christ did not die for all, because, as God, he had determined to pass by the greatest Part of Mankind, leaving them utterly incapable of being saved, by any part of his Merits? Could he be able to resist himself, or to reverse his irresistible Decree? and such was that of Reprobation, (say you.) From whence it must follow (according to your way of arguing,) That Christ was not sufficient to have saved all the World, but only those that he had Elected to be saved: He could not possibly save them to whom he had deny'd a possibility, and the very passive Power of being saved. From whence it follows, that Christ might have been a sufficient Saviour for all the World, from all Eternity, if he had pleased. But you say, he was not pleased; yea, that he was pleased *not* to be their Saviour; and then how could he be their Saviour against his Will and good Pleasure? and yet you say, he saved all sufficiently: who did nothing towards it, nor ever had it in his Thoughts. That is to say, [He is their Saviour, because he was able; and He is not, because he would not do what he was able.] Very fine Logick indeed! We may as well say, That God made a Thousand Worlds with Inhabitants beside this, [and add the Distinction not *intentionaliter* but *sufficienter*] because he was able, and might have done it, if he had pleased. Or, that he destroyed this very Globe of ours 10 or 20 Years ago, because he had Power sufficient to have destroy'd it, if he had not decreed it a longer time of Duration. Or, that every Rich Man who is worth more than he owes, is truly a Payer of all his Debts, tho' he never doth pay them, nor doth ever intend it; but designs to cheat them all. And I believe, had you such a Debtor who should refuse to pay you the greatest

greatest Part of what he owes you, and yet confidently affirm that he pays you All, [explaining himself, that he was sufficient, but never meant it;] I am apt to believe you would call it Lye, or a Jeer, and but faintly thank him for such Payment. Far be it from me to think thus of our Redeemer. He offered up himself, not only sufficiently, but intentionally, for All. He earnestly desires that every one should come in, upon the Preaching of his Word, and receive the Benefit of his Death and Passion. His Warnings are not in Jest, his Invitations are Serious: *Depart from me, ye Cursed*, said he, to affright us, and make us take heed to avoid that dreadful Sentence. He is unwilling any should be caught in the Serpent's Snare, and therefore shews to All, without exception, *a way to escape*. He is not desirous to Strike, before he bids us *look to our Posture, and stand upon our Guard*, (as an Excellent Bishop speaks.) He shews his Power to Punish none, but only those that refuse his Mercy; and would not damn any one, without respect to Sin. So that, from what has been said, it is my humble Opinion, that Christ died for all Men, yea, ev'n those that took his Life away: for he *prayed for them earnestly*, yea, at a time when they cursed themselves; *His Blood be upon us*, say they: Yet, said the Meek and Merciful Jesus, *Father forgive them*: He desired his *Blood might be upon them*, (but not in their barbarous and cruel Sense;) for they meant the Guilt, but he meant not to Accuse, but Cleanse them. And I am certain, the *Church of England* teaches me this wholesome Doctrine of General Redemption, in her xxxix Articles, her Homilies, her Liturgy, her Catechism, her Book of Ordination, and her Book of Constitutions and Canons. For, can Words be more expressive in asserting Universal Redemption, than those in her 31st Article, where it is said,

said, *That Christ is a perfect Redemption, Propitiation, and Satisfaction for all the Sins of the whole World, both Original and Actual.* Also the Liberty of the Will, and the Co-operation of it with Grace, are asserted in the 10th Art. wherein there is not the least Sound of Irresistible Working upon the Hearts of Men. So that if all are not saved, as you objected, it is not for want of a Redeemer, but for want of complying with those Gifts and Graces purchased for them, and given to them in order to obtain Salvation. Shall I illustrate, by a familiar Comparison, how all are redeemed, tho' all are not saved. (a) Suppose the King of Spain had a Thousand Christian Subjects taken Captive by the Turk, and should agree for the Ransom of them all, and accordingly pays down the Price agreed upon; are not all equally Redeemed? tho' some perhaps be carried many Miles up in the Country, to some obscure or remote Parts, and so never hear of it; others who hear of it, may yet not believe it: and there may be some so ungrateful, who yet tho' they hear of it, and believe it too, yet have been so long accustomed to their Slavery, that they prefer it, before their Liberty, and so lose the Benefit of their Redemption. But further: That we may rightly understand the Distinction of being Sufficient to do a thing, and the doing a Thing sufficiently, which are so falaciously confounded, (the latter used for the former;) let us proceed with our Comparison a little further. If the King above mention'd should have given as much for the Ransom of two or three hundred, as would have been required for all the whole Thousand, but yet he will give the whole Sum,

(a) Agreeable to Bishop Beveridge's Catechism, composed by him, for the Diocese of St. Asaph.

because he will, and only release two or three hundred, and not the whole Thousand, merely because he will too, intending all the rest shall be Captives still, and this he will do, to shew his Power over the greatest Number, and his Partiality towards the lesser; Can that King say, with Truth or Modesty, that he is the Redeemer of all those Captives, because he paid a Sum of Money which had been sufficient to Redeem them all, but did not intend they should be taken into the Bargain? No, It only proves that he is not their Redeemer, but might have been if he had pleased; and that the *Turk* was less mercilefs than he, who would have given all back, if the King of *Spain* would have had him. The Case is the very same, in saying, Christ is the Saviour of Reprobates, Sufficiently, but not Intentionally. And now, my good Friend, being pretty nigh my Journeys End, I heartily thank you for your good Company, and should have been glad of enjoying it longer: but I am willing to hear what News at *Guild-Hall*, and so I bid you heartily Farewel.

Eutychus. I humbly thank you for your good Conversation, but I wish I could have had it longer; you seem indeed to talk very well, and I have so much Charity for you, as to think you are Mised, and that if you were but rightly informed in the Doctrine of Absolute Election, and what its Principles tend to, you would have a greater value for the Sweetness of Christs Electing Love, than you seem to have.

Epenetus. Sir, I was always of a teachable Temper, and should be very glad of embracing every Opportunity of being undeceived of any Error I am possessed withal, and, with your leave, I will wait on you to Morrow at your Dwelling House.

Eutychus.

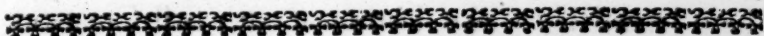
Reprobation, fully Detected. 31

Eutychus. I am very much obliged to you, for your kind Offer, and shall be heartily glad to see you there, as early as you can. In the mean while, I heartily bid you Adieu.

The End of the First Conference.



C O N F E R E N C E II.



Epenetus.

I Am come to pay you a Visit, according to my Promise; but I must ask Pardon for staying so late; Business falling out cross, hinder'd my coming sooner.

Eutychus. Pray, my Friend, sit down: I was just now ruminating upon what you said Yesterday; neither can I be reconciled to your Opinion; for, in my sense, it detracts from the Merits of Christ, arguing that a Man may do something to discriminate himself in the Work of Grace and Salvation; and so, in some sort, making Man become his own Saviour; which seems to me directly contrary to the Apostle, 1 Cor. 4. 7. where he saith, *Who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou, that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?*

Epenetus. I have endeavour'd to inform my self touching that Text, and I have learn'd, that it it speaks not of Sanctifying Grace, but of such as was given to those Teachers; not so much for the private

private good of themselves, as for the publick Benefit of the Church, as appears 1 Cor. 3. 5. Christ had no Universities, in those Days, to bring up Apostles in; but finding very few, if any, fit for the Work of the Ministry, which he had occasion to employ them in, he made them fit by Miracle; and being qualified upon that account, the Apostle justly checks their Arrogance, for glorying of such Gifts, as were not acquired by their own Study and Industry, but inspired into them immediately of the Holy Ghost. So that there is a wide difference between those Supernatural Gifts and Graces, which brake in upon them irresistibly (like Light, at the first Creation, 2 Cor. 4. 6.) and those Gifts of saving Faith and Holiness, whereof the Possession is a matter of free Choice and Acceptation, Deut. 30. 19. Luke 10. 42. Prov. 1. 29. This Light may be excluded and resisted, Job. 1. 5. and Job. 5. 35. Job 24. 13. Job. 3. 19. Such therefore as do embrace this Light, may very well be said to difference themselves from such as do reject it. For when our Saviour tells *Martha*, *One thing is needful: Mary hath chosen the good Part*; Doth he not commend *Mary* for such a Discrimination? But if this had been made in her, by the sole Irresistible Operation of Divine Grace, *Martha* might very easily have excused her self, and have charged the Fault [that she had not made the like Choice] upon His Deficiency, in a Matter so needful to her. Again; Why was our Saviour so transported with Admiration at the Faith of some, as well as at the Unbelief of others, Mat. 8. 10. if that Faith were wrought so irresistibly, that the Believer contributed nothing towards it? Tis certain, some do neglect the Gift that is given them, and bury their Talents, and do receive the Grace of God in vain: others are careful to retain, and stir up, to employ and improve

improve what they have received. Now, does not he that obeys God, certainly differ exceedingly from him that obeys him not? and does not his Obedience (which is his own Act and Duty, performed by the Assistance of God's Grace) help to make the Difference? nothing, I presume, can be more evident: If Man can do nothing to difference himself; Why doth God give so many Commands to him, for his Renovation and Improvement? (a) Why doth he render *Praise* and *Glory* to his Saints, (b) and so often commend them, saying, *They are worthy*? (c) Why doth he so earnestly invite them to their Duty, by Promises and Threatnings? (d) Why doth he upbraid Unbelievers for *rejecting the Counsel of God against themselves* (e), and *judging themselves unworthy of Eternal Life*? and finally brands them with Shame, Confusion, and Eternal Torments?

Eutychus. But will not this be apt to make the Regenerate Man Unthankful? seeing (by you) they receive no more than the Unregenerate do? And does not this (as I said before) make Men their own Saviours, and give the determining Vote on humane Liberty?

Epenetus. Tho' the Faithful and Unbelievers receive alike in Preventing Grace, yet the Faithful receive such assisting and following Grace, which the others receive not. For, *to every one that hath, (that is, makes a good Use of what he hath) shall be given more.* Besides, am not I obliged to be thankful to my Benefactor, altho' others do undervalue and slight his Bounty? Shall not the Children of Sion be joyful in their King, and sing Ho-

(a) Deut. 10. 16. Jer. 4. 4. Ezek. 18. 31. Eph. 4. 22. 2 Cor. 7. 1. (b) Job 2. 2, 3. Rom. 2. 29. Mat. 25. 23. (c) Rev. 3. 4. (d) Rom. 8. 13. Isa. 1. 19, 20. Rom. 2. 6, &c. (e) Luke 7. 30. (f) Acts 13. 46.

Janna to the Son of David, altho' others cry out,
We will not have this Man to reign over us? And
 as to Mens being their own Saviours, (a) "All this is
 " mere Cavil, (says Bishop Tillotson) as will ap-
 " pear to any one by this plain Instance. A Re-
 " bel is Convicted, and liable to the Sentence and
 " Condemnation of the Law; he sues for a Pardon,
 " and obtains and accepts it; will any Man now
 " say, that because he asks, and accepts it from the
 " King, and the King does not take his Hand and
 " open it, and violently thrust the Pardon into it;
 " that this Man saves himself, and takes away the
 " Glory of the King's Grace and Mercy; and that
 " he owes his Life to himself, and not to the King's
 " Bounty and Goodness? A Man would be thought
 " very senseless, that should so ascribe this Man's
 " Deliverance to any Act of his own, as not to think
 " it wholly owing to the King's Grace and Favour.
 " I think the Case is the very same, concerning
 " Man's not complying with that Grace which
 " God affords them for their Repentance unto Life.
 " I would fain know (as he goes on) of those sub-
 " tle Objectors, whether *Moses*, when he says,
 " *Deut. 30. 19. I have set before you Life and*
 " *Death, Blessing and Cursing, therefore chuse*
 " *Life*; do not, in so saying, plainly suppose that
 " Men may chuse Life, or refuse it? And if so,
 " whether he intends to make Men their own
 " Saviour?

Eurychus. But if this be so, then every Repro-
 bate, yea, *Judas* himself, has as much cause to
 thank God, as the Elect; ev'n *Peter* himself, and
 the rest of *Christ's* Disciples.

Epenetus. (b) "And who ever deny'd, or can de-

(a) *Tillotson's Sermons*, Vol. Xth. Sermon 13.

(b) *Ibid.*

ny (saith the Bishop) that a Rebel who refuseth
 a Pardon offer'd to him by his Prince, hath not the
 same real Obligations of Gratitude to his Prince,
 with him that accepts it? The Prince offers the
 same Favour to both, and the Obligation is equal;
 and tho' he that accepts it, do not save himself;
 yet he that refuseth it, destroys himself: And at
 the Judgment of the Great Day, all impeni-
 tent Sinners, under the Gospel, shall be for-
 ced to acknowledge the Grace of God to them,
 in affording the Opportunity of Salvation,
 and shall only blame and condemn themselves for
 neglecting that happy Opportunity. But if an
 irresistible Degree of God's Grace be necessary
 to every Man's Salvation, it is plain that impe-
 nitent Sinners never had the Opportunity of Sal-
 vation; and consequently cannot condemn them-
 selves for the neglect of it." Thus far the Arch-
 Bishop.

Eutychus. But is not Election said to be *not of works, but of him that calleth*? Which by no means allows of an Election upon Intuition or Foresight of what we can do. For when God is said to Predestinate, it is said to be done *according to His good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself*, Eph. i. 9. So that here is nothing for Man to boast on. It is God that makes the Difference, as well as God that chuseth.

Epenetus. I confess, with you, that it is God that maketh the Difference; because without his Grace, we could do nothing that is good. But then, I humbly conceive, there must be a Difference, before there can be an Election. Love is indeed an Act of Favour, but Election is properly an Act of Judgment; a preferring the Better before the Worse. For is it not safer to say, that those Men are chosen by God, that Believe in Christ, and that others are rejected by him for their Infidelity, than to say,

(with you) we are Elected and Reprobated, without any Regard to our Actions, whether good or bad? So that when we are said to be Elected by *his good pleasure*, I do not think the word *good pleasure* doth signifie the Absoluteness of his Will, but the Respectiveness of it; for it relates to something in which God is *well-pleased*, and that is Christ. It being impossible for God to be pleased with Mankind, or that Mankind should be acceptable to God, any otherwise than in Christ, of whom it was said, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*. Which shews, that Election is Respective and Conditional; and that there is no other Predestination, than in and through Christ. Which agrees exactly with the 17th Article of the Church of England. And this is the Style and Language of the New Testament, namely, That the Promises of Eternal Life are Conditional. *If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, &c. thou shalt be saved*, Rom. 10. 9. From whence it follows, That if thou shalt *not confess with thy Mouth*, nor *believe in thine Heart*, &c. thou shalt be damn'd. *If ye forgive not Men their Trespases, neither will your Father forgive your Trespases*, Mat. 6. 15. *If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us*, 2 Tim. 2. 12. *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*, Luke 13. 5. *If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your Sins*, Joh. 8. 24. In a word: The very End of our Saviour's coming into the World, was, *To save us from our Sins*, Mat. 1. 21. *To redeem us from all Iniquity*, Tit. 2. 14. Now, the End (we know) is the prime Condition, the greatest Requisite of all; which to neglect, is the true Cause of Condemnation: For so runs the Sentence of our Saviour, *Mat. 25. 41. Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting Fire*. Why? For what Reason? He gives the true Reason in the next Verse,

Verse, (not because ye were Reprobated by an absolute Decree, not because ye were ordain'd to be *Vessels of wrath*, by a meer Irrespective and Inexorable Will; but) because *I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: Because I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink:* (Which how could they have given him, if it had not been given them *from Above* to give?) From which, and a thousand Texts beside, we may learn, That no Man is Infinitely punished by an Unavoidable Necessity, for not doing his Duty, when it was not in his Power to do it. Impossibility is not a Sin; and therefore I believe no Man is punished for not doing that which it is Impossible for him to do. *Adonibezek* indeed was cruel, in cutting off Mens Thumbs, and then making them *gather up Meat under his Table*, Judg. 1. 7. *Pharaoh* more cruel, in requiring a *Tale of Bricks*, where he gave *no Straw*. But I tremble to think what God must be, if Men are cast by him, into a Lake of Fire and Brimstone, there to be tormented to all Eternity, and this by an Absolute Irrespective Decree. No, our Master whom we serve, is *no Respector of Persons*, Rom. 2. 11. but will *render to every Man according to his Works*. *For whatsoever a Man soweth, that shall he also reap*, Gal. 6. 7. Christ is called *the true Light, which lighteth every Man that cometh into the World*, Joh. 1. 9. So that if any are in the Dark, it is not for want of Light, but because they will not see; which is the very Interpretation that St. *John* himself gives it, *chap 3. ver. 19. This (says he) is the Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and Men loved Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds were evil*. Now, I pray you, consider a little with your self, Was not the Reason of their Condemnation, the Condition upon which they were determined to be Damn'd? I am sure you must allow nothing can be said more plainly, or more convincingly, to prove that it was so.

And indeed, if we look into God's Promises and Threatnings, they all run Conditional; which none, I think, can deny, witness the Denunciations of Destruction to the *Ninevites*, *Jonah* 3. 4, 10. and of certain Death to *Hezekiah*, *2 Kings* 20. 1, 5. Yet the first was not *destroy'd*, nor the second did not *die* at that determinate Time when God had threatned they should; of which no Reason can be given, but that God's Purposes, Decrees and Threats were Conditional: On Supposition of their Impenitence, he threatned to destroy; and therefore, on Sight of their Repentance, he promised to preserve. From hence let us thus argue, Is God so merciful to the Bodies of Men? And is he less merciful to their Souls? Does he decree Temporal Judgments conditionally, because he is pitiful? and will he decree Eternal Ones absolutely, meerly because he will? Is he so unwilling to inflict the *first Death*, and will he shew his Power, his Absolute Power in the *second*? Did he spare *Nineveh* in this Life, because they were Penitent? and will he damn them in the next, because they were Heathens, by his Peremptory Decree?

Eutychus. Sir, what you infer, seems very Natural, but yet I think your Doctrine seems to allow of no other Cause of Election and Reprobation, but Faith and Infidelity; which derogates from the Mercy of God, and the Merits of Christ.

Epenetus. Here you are under a mistake, I never said that Good Works were a Cause of our Election, but only that they are required as a necessary Condition, tho' utterly unworthy to be the Cause of our Election. I allow that Christ is the Means, the Meritorious Cause of our Election: But I believe that God gave the Promise of Eternal Life, upon the Condition of *believing in his Son*, *Joh.* 3. 16. And I hope you will put a difference between the Cause,
and

and the Condition.. God never adopteth a Child, nor acknowledgeth him for his own, so as to give him Eternal Life, unless it be for the sake of his only begotten Son. Indeed God pitied a woful World; then he loved what he pitied; next he gave his own Son to save what he loved; but it was upon the Condition of *believing in his Son*, that he gave the Promise of *Eternal Life*. For in the 3d of *St. John* verse 16. Believing is so interposed between *Love* and *Life*; *God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not Perish but have Everlasting Life.* Whence it is plain, that *God loved the World*, before he he gave his Son for it; for therefore gave he his Son, because he loved it. So that I believe the World could not be capable of a Love to Everlasting Life, but only in and through the Son, and this upon Condition of our believing in him. It must be therefore in Prescience of our believing in Christ; that God Elected us to Life Eternal. For Christ is not only the Means, but the meritorious Cause and Head of our Election. Christ was fore-known, *1 Pet.* 12. and we in him, *Rom.* 8. 29. Christ was predestined, and we by him, *Eph.* 1. 5.

Eutychus. I do believe that Eternal Life is promised and designed Conditionally, namely, upon our Believing; but the Means thereto, ev'n Faith, and Repentance, are promised Absolutely.

Epenetus. If the Means are Absolutely decreed, in order to obtain the End, consequently the Elect must use the Means, whether they will or no; and the Reprobate must be damned, for not using those Means to obtain Salvation, which it was never designed they should use; because their End was to be damned, by reason of God's Eternal Decree. So that a Man may truly argue thus with himself, (according to your Principles,) Our City is (they say) just begun to be Infected: But if I must die

of this Infection, I must; if I shall not die, I shall not; and therefore, I need not use Means to avoid or escape it. But however, if I must use Means, I must, if I must not, I must not: because God's Decree necessitateth as much to use, or omit the Means, as to obtain, or lose the End. Pray, Sir, is not this quite contrary to Scripture, where God's Promise of the End, doth not acquit us of using the Means; as we may see in the Example of King *Hezekiah*, he was sick unto Death; but, upon his Devotions, his Prayers, and Tears, God was pleased to send his Prophet to him, with the joyful Message of his Recovery, *Behold I will add to thy days fifteen years?* Isa. 38. 5. And yet, to shew they should not rely upon God's Intent and Promise for the End, without the Use of the Means, the Prophet commanded, *Let them take a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaister upon the Boil, and he shall recover.* And the Example of the Apostles Voyage is very remarkable, *Acts* 27. wherein being in extremam Danger by Reason of the Tempest, the Angel of God (at last) appears to Paul, saying, *Fear not, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee,* ver. 24. Yet to shew the use of Means was necessary for obtaining the End, namely, the Safety here promised, the same Paul (when he saw the Shipmen about to flee out of the Ship) said to the Centurion, and to the Soldiers, *Except these abide in the Ship, ye cannot be saved,* ver. 30. 31. Now, is it not very plain, that had not the Plaister of Figs been applied to the Sore of *Hezekiah*, he had not recovered: and had not the Centurion and Soldiers kept the Seamen in the Ship, they had suffered Shipwrack. But if the Lord had absolutely decreed the recovery of *Hezekiah* by such a Plaister, and had absolutely promised too, that he would infallibly apply it himself, the Prophet had been (at least) impertinent in prescribing the Application to
be

be made by others that attended on him. In like manner, had the Lord absolutely decreed the Safety of all the Passengers in the Ship, upon Condition of the Mariners Presence and Labour in it, and had absolutely promised to make good the Condition also, that is, by Force to cause those Mariners to abide and labour therein, (which is the very Case in the Matter of Salvation objected by you) *Paul's* Jealousy of the Seamen's Departure out of the Vessel, had been Culpable, and his Motion to the Centurion and Soldiers Impertinent; nay, his Advice and Acting herein, had been so far from Prudence and a Duty, that it had argued in him a piece of Infidelity, a Distrust of God's Power and Faithfulness. Pray, Sir, resolve me one Question: Dare you affirm, that God hath Conditionally decreed the End of the Malefactor; but the Means to be used by him, in order to bring him to that End, (namely, the Gallows) are absolutely decreed? No certainly; for as God never decreed any Man to an ill End, so neither hath he decreed the Means, in order to that End. God never made Men Murderers, that they might die Malefactors; nor forbid it only in Formality, but decreed Men should act it in Reality. You say, indeed, that Salvation is Conditional, but the Means thereto are Absolute; and if those of Salvation are Absolute, so must those of Damnation: Which is just as if you should put out a Man's Eyes, and then say to him, If you can tell me the Colour of this Ribbon, I will save thy Life; but if not, I will kill thee. For a Blind Man may, with less Injustice, be Murder'd, because he cannot distinguish between White and Black; than a Reprobate Damned, for not performing Obedience to the Laws of God, when his End was decreed long before he was born; and consequently, the Means thereto: which, you say, are Absolute, in order to the End.

Hear,

Hear, I pray you, what a Learned Doctor of our own Church says on this Particular, (a) "Upon the Performance of God's Covenant, we may still be saved; and Perform it, every one of us may, if he please." [Agreeable to what Bishop Beveridge says, in his *Private Thoughts*, I believe every Man may be saved that will.] "For though we can do nothing of our selves, yet we may *do all things through Christ that strengthens us*. He has adapted his Covenant to our Capacities, rendred our Duty, ev'n under those Ruins and Decays of our Nature, in all its Parts, practicable; and made his *Yoke easy, and his Burden light*. His Dispensation, does not, like that of *Pharaoh*, require us to make *Brick without Straw*; or to fulfil his Precepts, without supplying us with Strength to do it. — For to what Purpose does he so warmly, so earnestly invite us to return to him and live, if he puts it not into our Power to accept these Invitations? To what Purpose so zealously endeavour to allure us into our Duty, by his Promises of Pardon and Peace, of Life and Happiness, if we are not enabled to lay hold upon these Promises? To what purpose, by such vehement and solemn Protestations, continually assure us of his infinite and boundless Compassion for Souls, if he inexorably holds back his Hand, and denies them his Assistance to recover out of that Pit, wherein he knows they must necessarily and unavoidably perish? These Protestations, these Promises, these Invitations, at this rate, would be useless and insignificant, irrational and absurd, unkind and reproachful: no less insignificant, absurd, and reproachful, than 'twould be for one of us to hold forth a Crown of Gold to a Man that hath lost his Arms, and importune

(a) Dr. Gregory.

“ him to accept it, and place it upon his Head ;
 “ or to entreat a Man that lies upon the Ground,
 “ bound Hand and Foot with strong Chains and
 “ Fetters, to rise up and walk. —

Eutychus. But these Invitations (a) “ are most
 “ properly to the Elect, accidental to the Repro-
 “ bate, as they are mingled among the Chosen ;
 “ so that God’s Invitation to Reprobates, is to this
 “ good End, namely, restraining them from run-
 “ ing into the highest excess of Evil, though he
 “ communicate not Renewing Grace unto them.”

Epenetus. How expressly this contradicts the
 Scripture, in all those Places where God’s Com-
 mands run in general Terms, to one as well as
 another, I have fully prov’d already: Yet, that I
 may give you what Satisfaction my weak Judg-
 ment is capable of, I will go on a little further.
 In my Opinion, you allow but small Comfort to
 the Sinner ; indeed, you have lessen’d his Punish-
 ment, but still he must be damn’d. *God command-
 eth, indeed, all Men every where to repent:* But
 you allow of another Command more secret, that
 they shall not repent. And this cannot be called
 two different, but two contrary Things in God ;
 a Command to be obey’d, and a Command not
 to be obey’d. For tho’ *he would have all Men to be
 saved* ; yet you say, he denies the Means of Sal-
 vation to Reprobates, whereby they should be fa-
 ved. Which agrees exactly with what you said once
 before, That the Means are Absolute, tho’ the Pro-
 mise be Conditional. Therefore, seeing you do allow
 of a Conditional Promise, you must allow, that
 this Promise, tho’ made in Time, was decreed to
 be a Conditional Promise from all Eternity ; which
 yet, it could not be, if God had not consider’d

(a) *Fiery Pillar*, pag. 71, 72.

the Condition, as well as the Promise to which it cleaves. And I hope you'll allow, God is not inconsiderate in any Thing or Circumstance that he decreed: and a Decree of any Thing, in Consideration of a Condition, is exactly the Thing I mean by a Conditional Decree. And what is thus argued from the Promises of God, which are Conditional touching Election, may equally be argued from his Conditional Threats for his Conditional Decree of Reprobation: For, as the Promise was Eternally in Idea or Conception, so also was the Condition; and as the Condition is Temporally in Act or Existence, so also is the Promise. And this agrees with the Apostle, *2 Thess. 2. 13. God hath from the Beginning chosen you to Salvation*, (he doth not say absolutely, but) *through Sanctification of the Spirit, and Belief of the Truth*; which God foreknew when he chose them, and according to *Fore-knowledge* they were chosen or elected, as *St. Peter* saith expressly, *1 Pet. 1. 2.* as 'twere, defining or explaining a Conditional Election: And *St. Paul* doth put Fore-knowledge before Predestination, *Rom. 8. 29.* which you may compare with *Rom. 11. 2. & Acts 2. 23.* And this is the Doctrine of the Church of *England*, in her 17th Article, where Conditional Predestination is sufficiently, tho' implicitly asserted; shewing clearly, That God's Eternal Decree of electing Men to Life Eternal, was made in Intuition of their being in *Christ*.

Eutychus. But if this be the Doctrine of the Church of *England*, many of her best Members have taught the contrary; witness *Bishop Usher*, *Mr. Perkins*, *Dr. Twisse*, &c.; and by what I can learn, it was taught many hundred Years ago, and ev'n by the most eminent Men in those Days; ev'n *St. Austin* himself, a Man so much admired by Protestants
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as well as Papists. And I am sure, in his *Meditations* he speaks full to the Purpose.

Epenetus. I can't see how They can justly be called the best Members of a Church, who teach Doctrines repugnant to her Injunctions and Principles: Beside, how many are there, that have been strenuous Assertors of those Absolute Decrees, in their Days of Ignorance and Youth, who growing to riper Understandings, and reading better Books, as well as conversing with better Company, and so duly weighing the Argument, by letting their Passions and Prejudices cool a little, have discern'd those Fallacies wherewith [before] they have been blinded. This was the Case of Bishop *Usher*, who, though late, yet, I verily believe, was a sincere Convert; it having been more than enough proved, that he affirm'd, not long before his Death, to several Persons of great Note, That he utterly rejected all those Opinions of Mr. *Calvin*. And as to St. *Austin*, his Words on this Particular (as cited by a Learned Divine of our own,) are, "*Nemo eligitur, nisi jam distans ab illo qui rejicitur: Unde quod dictum est, [quia elegit nos Deus ante Mundi Constitutionem] non video quomodo sit dictum, nisi de Præscientia, Fidei, & Operum pietatis, & mox. — Jacobus non electus est, ut fierit bonus, sed bonus factus, elegi potuit. (Augustin. ad Simplicianam, lib. 1. quæst. 2.)*" That is, "No Man is Chosen, unless as differing from him that is Rejected: Nor know I how it is said, That God hath chosen us before the Foundation of the World, unless it be meant of his Prescience of Faith, and good Works. — *Jacob* was not chosen, that he might be good; but having been seen to be made good, was capable of being chosen." And if St. *Austin* was so strenuous for Conditional Election, how much more for Conditional Reprobation? as may be

be seen in the Book above quoted, *Noluit ergo Esau, & non cucurrit, sed etsi voluisset, & cucurrisset, Dei adjutorio pervenisset, nisi Vocatione contempta reprobatus fieret*; "that is, *Esau* would not, and did not run; for if he had, he had attained, by the help of God, unless he would be made a Reprobate, by a Contempt of his Vocation." And as another Father truly says, *Omnium quidem hominum Deus Creator est, sed nemo ab eo ideo creatus est ut pereat*: "God is the Creator of all Men, but no Man was created to the End that he may perish."

Eutychus. God, indeed, created Man upright; but since he hath lost that Image of God, thro' his own Fault, God is not bound to restore it to him again: As a Master is not bound to renew his Servant's Stock, if he hath wasted it by bad Husbandry.

Epenetus. Tho' God is not simply and absolutely bound to any Man, being *Agens Liberrimum*, a most Free Dispenser of his own Favours, where, when, and to whom he will; yet he is Conditionally bound; for he hath been pleased to determine and tie himself several ways. 1st, By Decreeing, That Men should be endued with such Gifts, as shall enable them to perform Obedience to his Laws. And whatsoever He hath Decreed to Men, He is bound to give them, by Virtue of his own Decree, or else he would be Mutable. 2^{dly}, By Promising. For if God hath made a Promise to bestow any Gift or Grace to Men, his Goodness and Veracity bindeth Him to Performance: For we usually say, A Man, by Promising, is so far a Debtor, that he cannot break such a Promise, [where he was free to make it,] without an Act of Injustice. He that Promiseth, and Performeth not, is guilty of a Trespas, (witness *Ananias* and *Sapphira*) and unworthy the Kingdom of Heaven,
Psal.

Pfal. 15. 4. 3dly, By giving Men a Law to keep : But if he deny them supernatural Grace, they can no more keep it, than they can drink up the Ocean. By this Law, God bindeth himself to his People, to give them such a Power, as may enable them to keep that Law ; or else He becometh (as that evil Servant, in the Parable, stiled him) *a hard Master, reaping where he sowed not* ; and by Consequence, the true and proper Cause of the Transgressing that Law. Do we not ever find, that God always giveth Strength, where he giveth a Command ? Did not He give the Creatures a Multiplying Virtue, when he commanded them to *Encrease and Multiply* ? If he bids the Lame Man *Rise and Walk*, he puts his Limbs in an Ability of Walking. That God seems obliged to vouchsafe to Men the Power of keeping his Laws which he gives them, I conclude, for these Reasons : 1st, Because He was pleased to enter into a new Covenant of Peace with them, when he needed not. 2dly, In that Covenant, He requires Obedience at Mens Hands, ev'n at theirs that Perish. 3dly, Because He promiseth Eternal Life to every Man, if he obey and keep the Covenant. 4thly, Because He punisheth the Disobedient with Everlasting Death. From all which, I learn, That tho' the most Free God was Absolutely Bound to None, yet (these Particulars being granted, and since God hath been so gracious as to enter into Covenant with Man) He may be said, without detracting the least from his Divine Prerogative, to be so far Obligated to Mankind, as to vouchsafe them a Power of Obeying, where He hath used his Authority in Commanding. Or else we may as well say, That a King, having put out the Eyes of a Subject for an Offence, may afterwards, without any Injustice, command him to read a Book ; and because he readeth not, put him to Death. Or that a Master,

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(to use your own Comparifon) may take away that Stock from his Servant which he hath mifemploy'd, and afterwards exact of him a juft Employing of the fame Stock, and punifh him becaufe he improveth it not. But how Irrational and Hard-hearted would this be! If I am commanded to Believe; and if God's Commands are juft, light and eafy, and *not grievous*; there muft go along with that Command a Power to make it poffible: But, if to make a Man Believe, be God's Irrefiftible Work, accomplifh'd by his Almighty Power, not inferiour, in Mightinefs, to that whereby he did *Create the World*, and *Raife the Dead*; How can this be a poor Creature's Duty? Could we think it juft, in a tender Father, or can it be confiftent with Humanity, to impofe an intolerable Burden on his Child's Shoulders, and to whip him barbaroufly becaufe he doth not carry it, when fuch is his Weaknefs that he finks under it? furely this wou'd be extream Severity: And fhall we attribute the fame to God? God forbid.

Eutychus. In Answer to what you have faid, I muft, and ever did allow, that the Gospel is a Covenant of Grace; and that all Men are called upon to Believe: and that Grace, and Salvation may be faid to be offer'd unto All, upon Condition of Faith, though Faith it felf cannot be faid favingly to be offered; but as for Exhortation and Motives unto Faith, this Grace the Reprobates in the Church of God are Partakers of, as well as God's Elect.

Epenetus. If Grace and Salvation are offer'd to the Reprobates, under this new Covenant, not in Jelt, but in Earnelt, and if God doth intend not to delude, but to fave them, in this Offer, how dare you affirm, that it is impoffible the Reprobates fhould favingly Believe? All Legacies under an impoffible Condition, the Learned in the Law do account unworthy a wife Teftator; and therefore they conclude, they ought

ought in Justice to be paid absolutely, as if there were no Condition at all added to them: But a Stipulation, and any other Contract under an impracticable Condition, is accounted null and void. And are such Covenants applicable or becoming to the Majesty, Goodness, or Sincerity of God? Does it not favour too much of Hypocrisy, to offer Pardon and Eternal Life, upon Terms impossible? Suppose you and I were Travelling together, and there should come a Nobleman and tell us, that if we would mend our Pace, and follow him into such a City, he would give us Ten Thousand Pounds; and when we came just into the City, we should find that it was impossible to enter, except over one narrow Bridge, which having first entred himself, should then draw the Bridge after him, and seeing us at a stand, should then call and invite us, importune and intreat us to come over, yea, make many solemn Vows and Protestations, to signify the Reality and Earnestness of his Intentions; could any but a Madman think his Invitations and Promises to be serious, when at the same time he had made it impossible for us to enter? Or if a Man is made a Captive, and kept manac'd and fetter'd in Prison, tho' all the Prison-Doors be opened, and the Prisoner invited to come forth, with all the Rhetorick possible to be used; yet if his Fetters be not unlock'd, and his Chains taken off from his Legs, whereby he may be enabled to walk, all Invitations to set him at Liberty would be nothing but a piece of Mockery.

Eutychus. I find that you are still upon your Topicks of Conditional Election, and General Redemption.

Epenetus. I am so; for nothing seems more plain to me, than that God doth not punish Man because he hath no Talent, but because he squandereth it away; so that every Sinner had Grace,
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for this very Reason, that he hath lost it. He was *alive*, for this very Reason, that he is *dead*: He came alive out of God's Hands, but he falls desperately by his own. So that when a Man is said in Scripture, to be *spiritually dead in Trespasses and Sins*, he is imply'd in that Expression, to have been *spiritually alive*. And as to General Redemption, one would have thought enough had been said already to satisfy any reasonable Man; but I will proceed a little further touching that Point. You know it is said by St. Paul, 1 Tim. 4. 10. That Christ is the Saviour of all Men, specially of those that believe. And as if the Apostle had foreseen an Objection, that the Word [All] might be restrained unto the Household of Faith, he prevents it by a distinction of General and Special. For if he is a Special Saviour of Believers, he is a General Saviour of Unbelievers: not that Unbelievers can be saved, whilst they are obstinate Unbelievers, but upon Condition they will Repent and Believe; or else why should the Apostle affirm Christ to be a Saviour of All, and then come off with an [especially] to them that believe? certainly if it be every Man's Duty to believe in Christ, Christ died for every Man. But this is further confirmed by the Apostle's way of arguing, (2. Cor. 5. 14.) *If one died for all, then were all dead*. This is the major Proposition of an Hypothetical Syllogism, or beginning of the Condition: in which the thing to be proved is, *that all were dead*; and the medium to prove it, is, *that one died for all*. Now every Man that knows how to Reason, must allow, that the Argument for Proof of any thing, must be better known, than the Thing in question to be proved: so that if it be clear, that all Men were dead by the Fall of the first Adam, it must be clearer (as St. Paul argues) that Life was offered unto All, by the Death of the second Adam:

Adam: For if he had died for none but the *Elect*, then the *Elect* only were dead: for the Word (*All*) must signify as amply in the minor Proposition as in the Sequel of the major; or else the Reasoning will be fallacious or imperfect. The Apostle argues thus; *If one died for all, then were all dead: But one died for all;* (that must be the minor Proposition) *Then were all dead.* Now if you deny the minor, you must condemn the Sequel of the major, and so give the Lie to the very Words of the Text; which none, I think would do, but some daring Hereticks, who would conclude the greatest Falshoods from the Word of Truth. But this Point is yet more confirmed, from the Saying of the Apostle, (*Rom. 11. 32.*) that *God concluded all in unbelief,* (the *Gentiles* first, *ver. 30.* and afterwards the *Jews*, *ver. 31.* *that he might have mercy upon all.* From whence we may infer, that if this last (*All*) belong to none but the *Elect*, then none but the *Elect* were *concluded in Unbelief.* But it is plain, that all, without exception, were first or last *concluded in Unbelief*: therefore, the Mercy was meant to *All*, without exception. In fine, this Doctrine is confirmed from those *false Prophets* and *false Teachers* (*2 Pet. 2. 1.*) *who though privily bringing in damnable Heresies, ev'n denying the Lord that bought them, and bringing upon themselves swift destruction;* yet it is plain, they were such whom the Lord had *bought.* So far is God from being the Cause of Man's Destruction, by an absolute, irrespective, unconditional Decree, that he gave himself a Ransom ev'n for them that perish. They were not left out of the Bargain which was made with his Justice, but the Apostle tells us, they were actually *bought.*

Eurychus. Pray, Sir, If Christ gave himself a Ransom for All, yea ev'n for those that perish, does not this infer, that Christ's Merits were deficient,

and that the Blood of Christ was shed in vain; or, that Christ was deceiv'd in his Work of Redemption, having paid down the Price for *All*, but receiving but *Part* of his Purchase?

Epenetus. That All are not sav'd, is a melancholy Truth; and that Christ is the Saviour of All, is as certainly true; because he only offers, does not obtrude himself upon us. He offers himself to *all*, but most refuse him. He whose Blood was sufficient for Ten Thousand Worlds, would not grudge its Extent to the major Part of but One. He was merciful to All Men, but the greatest Part of Men are unmerciful to themselves. *He will have no Man to perish, but repent*, by his Antecedent Will; but by his Consequent Will, he will have every Man perish that is Impenitent. And I hope you will not say, the Apostle thought Christ's Blood was shed in vain; or, that he was deceiv'd in his Work of Redemption, when he said, Rom. 14. 15. *Destroy not him with thy Meat, for whom Christ died*: And 1 Cor. 8. 11. *And shall the weak Brother perish, for whom Christ died*?

Eutychus. But methinks you detract from the Free Grace of God, making no Difference between the Especial Grace procur'd for me by Christ, and vouchsaf'd to those whom he hath chosen, than you do between those ordinary Gifts and Graces conferr'd on the Reprobates.

Epenetus. I do allow of Free and Especial Grace, as much as any Man living; but I believe there is a General, as well as a Special Grace; neither do I think affirming both, is denying either.

Eutychus. Sir, If you allow of Special Grace, I can't see how this can be consistent with General or Universal Redemption.

Epenetus. Sir, I must be going; pardon my Abruptness; I shall be glad of another Conference with you: In the mean while, I would have you
con-

Reprobation, fully Detected. 53

consider what hath been already said, and the Lord give you Understanding: And so, Sir, I take my Leave of you.

The End of the Second Conference.



C O N F E R E N C E III.



Epenetus.

SIR, I am very glad to see you; are you going this Way?

Eutychus. Yes.

Epenetus. Sir, Don't you remember, the last Time we were together, you told me, if I allowed of Special Grace, you could not see how it could be consistent with my allowing General and Universal Redemption also?

Eutychus. I did so.

Epenetus. I am very sorry you can't see it; but I hope what *you* cannot conceive, is not for that Reason inconceivable. You have heard already, that Christ is a Conditional Saviour, who will not give a second Talent to him that squanders away the first, or wraps it up in a Napkin. Hear what the learned Bishop *Usher* hath said on this Point, that by Vertue of Christ's Death, "(a) God is

(a) Bishop *Usher* of the *True Intent and Extent of Christ's Death*, pag. 6.

"made placable to our Nature, but not actually
 "appeas'd with any, until he hath receiv'd his
 "Son. All Men may be said truly to have an In-
 "terest in Christ, as in Common, tho' all do not
 "enjoy the Benefits thereof." If you ask, Why?
 the Bishop will tell you, "Because they have no
 "Will to take it, they (a) refuse to accept the
 "gracious Offer that is made unto them." Now,
 that every Man in the World is made Savable by
 Christ, until he wilfully forfeiteth his Interest
 therein, the Bishop proves invincibly from these
 two Grounds of Reasoning, which cannot fail, First,
 "That it is every Man's Duty to accept of Christ
 "thankfully, and to apply him with Comfort un-
 "to his own Soul. Secondly, (b) That no Man is
 "bound by the Command of God to believe an
 "Untruth. (c) That Christ hath prepar'd for thee,
 "[O Man, whosoever thou art,] and the Gospel hath
 "offer'd unto thee, a sufficient Remedy for the
 "taking away of all thy Sins." These are that
 pious Bishop's own Sentiments, in his riper Years,
 whatever he formerly entertain'd in his Youth. But
 I cannot take my Leave of him yet; and I hope,
 your Patience will pardon my Digression, seeing I
 am so prevented by him. "God (saith he) hold-
 "eth out unto us the Golden Scepter of his Word,
 "and thereby not only signifieth his Pleasure of
 "admitting us unto his Presence, &c. but also sends
 "an Embassage unto us, and entreats us, that we
 "would *be reconciled unto him*, 2 Cor. 5. 20. The
 "Well-spring of Life is set open to all, Rev. 22. 17.
 "The Matter of our Redemption purchas'd by
 "Christ, lieth open to all, all are invited to it;
 "none that hath a Mind to accept of it are ex-
 "cluded from it."

(a) Bishop Usher, *ibid.* p. 8.
especially p. 27.

(b) *Ibid.* p. 24, 25.

(c) *Ibid.* p. 7.

For, if Christ dy'd *for us Men and for our Salvation*, (as in the *Nicene Creed* it is expressed by an Indefinite Equivalent to Universal,) or *for me and all Mankind*, (as the Catechism hath it,) or *for all the Sins of the whole World, both Actual and Original*, (as the Church hath it in her Articles;) I would fain know, how the greatest Part of Mankind can be pass'd by in *Massa*, or Absolutely Reprobated, without respect to their Actual Sins?

Eutychus. Sir, since you are so much against Absolute Election and Reprobation, you seem to rob God of his Omnipotency, allowing no other Will to be in God, than a Hypothetical, or Conditional one.

Epenetus. This Objection need no other Answer, than what I have already said, (Page 19 of the First Conference;) for I never deny'd, that God hath an Absolute Will, as well as a Conditional one: But then there is a Distinction between an Absolute Necessity, and a Necessity *ex Hypothesi*; whereof the former doth infer a very Absolute Will in the Almighty. Such was his Will, that all Men should be mortal; that heavy Bodies should tend downwards; that Fire should burn; and innumerable others: So that when I speak of Conditional and Respective, (exclusive of Absolute,) it is only in relation of Eternal Punishment and Reward, which is the very Way of Expression in Scripture upon those Points; neither do I believe any Christian ever did deny Absolute Decrees, no, not even *Arminius* himself. But then we are to distinguish rightly of God's Will. I have learn'd to distinguish between God's first and second Will. His first Will is, that the Sinner shall not die, but *rather return from his Wickedness, and live*: His second Will is, that he that refuseth to return, shall receive the Wages of Iniquity. Secondly, I have learned to distinguish between an Antecedent and Consequent

Will: The Antecedent is that, by which he wills that every Sinner should repent: His Consequent is that, by which he pre-ordaineth the Damnation of the Impenitent. Which Distinction is made, not in respect of God's Will simply, (in which there cannot be either *prius* or *posterius*, a First or a Last) but in respect of the Things which are the Object of his Will: For every Thing is will'd by God, so far forth as it is good. To make this plain by a Comparifon: A Judge, by his Antecedent Will, desires every Man should live; but by a Consequent Will, decrees the Death of the Murderer; tho' at the same time, he wisheth the Man were not a Murderer, and condemns him, not as a Man, but as a Murderer: For, whilst he hath a Will to hang the Murderer, he hath at the same time a Merciful Willingness to save the Man: He hangs the Man indeed, because he is a Murderer; but, if it lay in his Power, he would destroy the Murderer, to save the Man. But neither the one, nor the other is an Absolute, but a Conditional Will: He would save the Man with an *if* he were not a Murderer; and doth destroy the Murderer with a *because* he is a Malefactor. Just so God's Antecedent Will is; that *every Man would repent*, that so they may not perish: It is his Consequent Will, that every one may perish, who will not repent. Both the one, and the other, is Respective and Conditional. *Thirdly*, I have learn'd to distinguish between an Inviting and Revenging Will. The Inviting Will is that, by which all are *bidden* to the *Wedding-Feast*: His Revenging Will is that, by which he punisheth those that *will not come*. Or, *Fourthly*, I distinguish of the Will of God's Mercy, and of the Will of his Justice. It is the Will of his Mercy, that Christ should die for the Sins of *All*; but 'tis the Will of his Justice, that all should perish, who come not in to him when they are called; or who only so come,

as not to continue, and persevere unto the End. By this Distinction, we may learn to reconcile many seeming Repugnances in Scripture: For when it is said, that *God repenteth*, 1 Sam. 15. 35. it is meant of the first Will; and when it is said, he *cannot repent*, it is meant of the second. God's Mercy is above and before his Justice; and therefore it is his first Will, *that all should be saved, and come to the Knowledge of the Truth*, 1 Tim. 2. 4. but yet so, as that his Justice is not excluded by his Mercy: And therefore it is his second Will, that so many should be damn'd as *bated Knowledge, and did not chuse the Fear of the Lord*, Prov. 1. 29. It is the Will of his meer Mercy and Goodness, that all should live; whereas the Will of his Justice, that some should die, depends upon something in the Creature: So that the first shews him a tender and compassionate Father; the second speaks him an impartial and righteous Judge: Both proclaim him a powerful and an holy God. And now I appeal to you, whether what I have said, robs God of his Omnipotence, as you just now objected?

Eutychus. What you have said seems very rational; but yet, tho' we should grant, that God doth not Positively Reprobate any Man, yet he may Negatively, by passing by a great Part of Mankind, as they have All sinned in *Adam*.

Epenetus. Sir, I am very glad, that you begin to be asham'd of that rigid and frightful Doctrine of Absolute Reprobation, and Damnation; which you are forced to disguise with those invented and smother Terms, of *Preterition*, or *Negative Reprobation*. But what if it appear, that there is no real Difference between Preterition and Reprobation, or between a Negative, or a Positive Reprobation; as you and others are fain to Cant it? For, if Men are pass'd by, for not being approved, they that are not approved, must be rejected, and they that are rejected

rejected, can't avoid being damn'd. The Case is plain, that this is only a Trick, insufficient to buoy up a sinking Cause: For, I pray you, What is it to reprobate, but not to approve, or to reject? And what Sense is it to say, there is a negative, not approving, [or Reprobation,] and a positive, not approving, [or Reprobation:] Or, if Reprobation is taken in a positive Sense only, (as it cannot be both at once positive and negative,) what Sense is it to say, there is a Negative Positive, and a Positive Negative? Therefore, my dear Friend, consider, when all that are pass'd by are damn'd, and all are damn'd that are pass'd by, what real Difference can you assign between Preterition and Damnation? Sure, the not approved are rejected, because they are not approved; and the rejected are not approved, because they are rejected, (supposing the Rejection to be made either in, or before the Fall of Adam.) And this need no better Proof, than that Saying of Mr. Calvin; who, I am inform'd, thus speaks, (a) *Quos praterit reprobat, nec alia causa, nisi ab hereditate quam filiis suis predestinat, illos vult excludere.* In English thus, "Whom God passeth by he reprobates, and for no other Cause, than his Will to exclude them from the Inheritance which he predestines to be his Sons." Now, what a Mockery is this to the Justice, Mercy, and Goodness of God, and what a bitter Jeer to the greatest Part of Mankind, to say, they are rejected, without Respect unto their Sins; and yet not damn'd, without Respect unto their Sins: But if All have sinned in Adam, and he who hateth nothing that he hath made, hath pass'd by the greatest Number, without providing any Remedy, or giving Christ to die for them; it follows,

(a) Calvin Inst. l. 3. cap. 23. sect. 1. fol. 322.

that if some of those that are passed by should die in their Infancy, or in the Womb, before they commit Actual Sin, they must be damn'd, meerly upon the Sin of *Adam*. Contrary to *Ezek. chap. 18*. For if Christ *tasted Death for every Man* that fell in *Adam*, there could be no Preterition, or Negative Reprobation of any one. And if there are Multitudes for whom he died not, nor was intended by God to be a Ransom for them; then, as they were passed by in *Massa*, so were they also in God's Decree condemn'd to be reprobated in *Massa*. For so they certainly must be, who being fallen in *Adam*, were never so much as intended to be raised by Christ.

Eutychus. But, Sir, I have one Objection, which I cannot get rid of, and that is, If God's Decree of Man's Salvation be Conditional, how is this consistent with God's Eternity, Immutability, Omnipotency, Simplicity, or other excellent Perfections of his Nature? For, that which is Absolutely Eternal, had nothing going before it; for it is *Absolutè Primum*: But all God's Decrees (being Acts within himself) are Absolutely Eternal; therefore they can have no Condition or Consideration of any Thing, without himself going before them.

Epenetus. If you mean a Priority of Order, and from thence infer the Impossibility of Conditional Decrees, because whatsoever is Eternal, hath nothing going before it, then your Arguing is against the Trinity of the Godhead; for the Father is the First Person, the Son the Second, and the Holy-Ghost the Third; and, by a Priority of Order, (tho' not of Time,) the First is before the Second, as the Second before the Third. So that according to your way of Reasoning, the Second and Third Persons cannot be Absolutely Eternal; because (say you) whatsoever is so, is *Absolutè Primum*. Therefore, consequently, the Second

cond and Third Persons not being the First Person, (according to your Reasoning) are not Absolutely Eternal. But, I pray observe, the Three Persons are Co-eternal, tho' they differ in Order, the First from the Second, and the Second from the Third, Nay, they differ also in their Properties and Manner of Working: The Father Existing and Working from Himself; the Son from the Father; and the Holy-Ghost from both: As you your self cannot deny. Now, that which is of it self Only, is before that which is of Another, in some respect: Therefore, that which is Eternal, may have something going before it, by a Priority of Order. As when we say, *God is First*; we imply his Being in the *First*, Word and his Attribute in the *Third*. Again, there must be Men, before they can be Happy: So, God's Decree that there shall be Men, is (by one kind of Priority) before his Decree that they shall be Happy. And Divines do usually place an Order in God's Decrees, wherein one thing goes before another: For as now, in Time, Sin goeth before the Punishment; so, from all Eternity, God foreknew this Priority of the Sin, and the Posteriority of the Punishment: Nor could he possibly decree the *Second*, until he had foreknown the *First*. For he decreed to punish Sinners, according to his Foreknowledge that they would sin; because, whatsoever he did decree, he did not decree it Cruelly, or by Chance, nor at a Venture, but *knowingly, wisely, and righteously* decree it. So that God's Foreknowledge and Decree, were neither one before the other, in Order of Time; (for that wou'd imply a Contradiction;) although, in Order of Nature, his Foreknowledge of Sin, did precede his Decree to Punish Sinners; and his Foreknowledge that Man would Sin, did precede his Decree to Permit it. For Example: God foreseeing or foreknowing that *Adam* and *Cain* would determine
their

their Wills to sin, decreed to permit, and to punish both. In which Case, his Prescience was in Order before his Decree; because his Decree to punish, was made, in a Prescience that they would determine their Wills to sin: But, by your way of Reasoning, God did Absolutely Decree that *Adam* shou'd Eat against Precept, and that *Cain* shou'd Kill his Brother.

Eutychus. Why, don't you think, that God's Prescience of a Thing future, must needs presuppose a Predestination or a Foreordaining of it?

Epenetus. No, by no means; for then (as I said just now) his Decree would go before his Prescience: which, I have proved, can't be, because it would make God the Author of all the Sin in the World; for if God foresaw nothing but as being fore-ordained or decreed by him, then his Fore-knowledge of all the Wickedness in the World could not be, 'till he had predetermined or foreordained it shou'd be done. Which makes God (I tremble to speak it!) worse than the Devil; for the Devil can only tempt Men to sin, cannot force them to commit it: Whereas you imply, that God from all Eternity (before Man or the Devil had any Existence) predetermined not only the Temptation of Sin, which is the Devil's Work, but also the yielding to that Temptation; yea, the Determination of both their Wills to both their Sins. Besides, God, in his Law, has forbid all Sin in general: How is this consistent with Absolutely and Irresistibly tying up Mens Wills to Sin? I am pretty confident, that not making a right Distinction between God's Prescience or Foreknowledge, and his Decree, has been the principal Cause of your's and others Erring in this Point. Now, in order to set you right in this Particular; consider That to Know, is properly an Act of the Intellect; but to Decree or Determine,
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is an Act of the Will. The Act of Knowing, presupposeth the Object, which must needs be knowable by a Priority of Nature, before it is possible to be actually known. So that I do not think God's Foreknowledge, doth make Things simply to be, or not to be, by an Absolute Necessity; but his Decree (I speak of) must needs do both. This may be illustrated, by a Physician's Foreknowledge of Alteration in the Patient upon a certain Day, which yet hath nothing of his Efficiency in its coming to pass: But if the Physician decree to work a Change in the Patient, by such or such Means as he resolves on, he is then the Author of such a Change; and if it be on Purpose to Dispatch the Patient, it is not his Foreknowledge, but his Murder. Again: If God's Foreknowledge did imprint a real Necessity on Things foreknown, this monstrous Absurdity would unavoidably follow; That he must act in nothing Freely, but in every thing as a Necessitated and Limited Agent. A Blasphemy not to be escap'd, but by denying his Omniscience from all Eternity; which is as great a Blasphemy as the former. Further: If God's Fore-knowledge did necessitate the Things fore-known, it was either simply, as Fore-knowledge; or as God's Fore-knowledge in particular. Now, it could not be the first, because then the Fore-knowledge of every Prophet, were the Cause of Things future, which they foretold. *Cyrus* had then been beholden to the Prophet *Isaiah* for his Birth, because the Prophet foreknew it a hundred Years before: Nor yet the second, for God himself fore-knew what himself would chuse to do, yet did not necessitate himself. And, as I said before, the Object of Knowledge is before the Act, how long soever it may be after by a Posteriority of Time. God foreknew all Things that are good, as being certain that he would do them; and he also fore-knew

knew all things that are evil, as being certain that wicked Agents would freely do them, if they were not hindered; and as certain that he would not hinder, but permit, or suffer them to be done: both were present to his Omniscience from all Eternity. Now all Acts of true Knowledge, must needs imply Infallibility; or else it cannot be perfect Knowledge, but some other thing; so that all Acts of true Knowledge, infer a Necessity, altho' they cannot make any. But then, such a Necessity is inferred from every true Knowledge of what is past, as well as from a Knowledge of what is to come. And for want of rightly considering this Point, you have confounded it with Antecedent and Absolute Necessity, or a Necessity of the Thing, as of the Consequent or Effect. Now, to set this in a proper Light, consider the following Illustration. If I hear a Man Blaspheme against God, it doth necessarily follow that he Blasphemeth; for if he doth not, I do not hear him, it being impossible to hear what is not to be heard: but this being granted, that I do really hear the Man Blaspheme, his Blasphemy is inferr'd by a Necessary Consequence. Yet this is only a Necessity of Consequence, arising from the Truth of a Proposition; wherein the Reality of my hearing his Blasphemy being supposed, the Reality of the Blasphemy doth unavoidably follow. But my hearing him Blaspheme, doth not Necessitate his Blaspheming; for it would be what it is, if I did not hear it. And tho' I hear him Blaspheming at the same time he Blasphemes, yet, in Order of Nature, his Blasphemy hath the Priority; for he must be to be heard, before I can hear him. From whence it is manifest, that here is not any Absolute or Antecedent Necessity, or a Necessity of the Thing, as of the Consequence or Effect, but his Blasphemy is a Voluntary and Contingent Action. From what
has

has been said, the meanest Capacity may discern, that if God Foreknew from Eternity this Blasphemy of the Man, then, by a Necessary Consequence, the Man doth really Blaspheme: For if he doth not, God could not possibly Foreknow he doth. But this is only a Necessity arising from the Truth of that Proposition, That God's Foreknowledge is Infallible, or not capable of Erring; and that what he foreknows, is really foreknown; but not a Necessity of the Existence of the Thing, imprinted on the Blasphemer, by God's Foreknowledge; but still the Blasphemy is a Voluntary and Contingent Action: which it could not be, if the Man did commit it by an Antecedent Necessitation: and if he did, such Antecedent Necessitation must have proceeded from God's Omnipotence, and not at all from his Foreknowledge; it being the Nature of Knowledge, not to produce its Object, but to suppose it. God doth contemplate by his Knowledge, what he effecteth by his Power: but it is not in his Power to be Effective, of Sin; much less, in his Foreknowledge, to be Necessitative of Blasphemy.

Eutyclus. Suppose that we allow (with you) that God's Prescience doth not Necessitate Sin; yet I do believe that God is not an idle Spectator of this World; for nothing is done, or can be done in it, but what God hath decreed shall be done: (a) "For whatsoever God foreknows, that he willeth; because nothing can come to pass, which he willeth not."

Epenetus. Then it is certain, that three parts in four of the Things done in this World are Sins; therefore, according to this Opinion, God is the principal Cause of Sin, (as I have said before;)

(a) *Fiery Pillar*, pag. 15.

Devils and Men are but his Instruments. For Absolute Necessity hath that Influence on the Effect, which Prescience cannot be thought to have. For Instance: If I decree that my Servant shall rob my Neighbour, I do contribute more towards it, than if I foresee that he will voluntarily do it: And supposing my Decree to be Irresistible (as 'tis supposed to be in God,) it must produce a Causal Necessity.

Eurychus. I do not think, that because God is the Cause of all the Actions that are Sinful, that therefore he is Author of the Sinfulness of those Actions. He is the Cause of all our Works, but not of our Faults and Imperfections: He did decree that Man should sin, but yet that he should sin freely. As he that rides upon a Halting Horse, is the Cause of his Motion, but yet not of his Halting.

Epenetus. To say, God decreed Man should sin freely, implies a Contradiction: For, I pray you, how can Man sin Freely, if God had Absolutely decreed that he should Sin? Is not that which is a Principal Cause of any Action, a Cause of those Events which necessarily accompany that Action? This must and will be an Infallible Rule. Therefore, if God by his Decrees do force us to those Actions which cannot be done without Sin; God himself (I fear to speak it) must needs be guilty of Sin. For Example: If God decreed that *Adam* should of Necessity eat the forbidden Fruit, and seeing the eating of that which was forbidden to eat, must needs be a gross Violation of the Law of God; how will you, by this Distinction, justify God? For *Adam* sinned because he eat the Fruit forbidden: But you say, God decreed Necessarily and Unavoidably that he should eat that which was forbidden. The Consequence of which, is a Blasphemy not to be often repeated. According to

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this distinction, a Murderer at the Bar, might tell the Judge, that he did indeed cut the Deceased's Throat, but it was not that which took away his Life, but the extinction of his Natural Heat and Vital Spirits. Who would not admire the Weakness and Extravagance of this Defence? yet such a Frenzy as this, you charge upon God, making his Decree the Cause that *Adam* took the Fruit, and put it into his Mouth, causing him to eat, what he was commanded upon pain of Death not to eat, and yet say, God was not the Cause of his transgressing that Command. Your Example of the Lame Horse, is a meer Impertinency, not being applicable to us, (because we halt Naturally;) but suppose it were, yet *Adam*, before eating, was sound; and therefore God's necessitating him to such an Inconveniency, he dealt with him, just as if one should drive a specious Nag into such rough Passages where he must needs break his Legs. Neither, as I said before, is it applicable to us who are the Lame Posterity of *Adam*. For he who rideth upon an Horse who was lame before, altho' he be not a Cause of the Impotency which he findeth in the Horse already, yet in urging him to Motion, he is now a Cause of the Actual Imperfection in the Motion, and so perhaps a Cause of encreasing the Impotency for the future; tho' he were not the Cause of his Lameness, yet he is of his Limping at that time. Let the Horse stand still, and see whether he will halt or no. Indeed, if the Horse go of it self, then the Rider is no cause of his halting; and so we may say, that all our Haltings are from our selves, without any Infligation from God. I beseech you, Sir, if a Man put a Burthen upon another's Shoulders, which he that bore it could not afterwards throw off, and by that means he should break his Ribs, would not he that put on such a Burthen, be
looked

looked on as the Breaker of his Ribs, especially if he had known the Event of the Action?

Eutyclus. Most certainly.

Epenetus. Shou'd a Man push another, walking by a River-side, into the Water, who shou'd there be drown'd; shou'd we not say, that he who thrust him in, drown'd him?

Eutyclus. Certainly.

Epenetus. How will you then reconcile this, with what you have said before. For if nothing can come to pass, but what God willeth, and if what God permits, should be called an efficacious Permission, whereby God does something, so that Sin necessarily follows; then, as he that breaks down a Dike is the Cause of losing a Field, because he did that which necessarily produced that Loss, so God is the Author of Sin, since he has put Man under a Necessity of sinning; and so must be the Cause not only of the Action, but of the Viciousness of the Action; which you deny.

Eutyclus. May not God work most Holily in those very Actions wherein Man works unrighteously?

Epenetus. By no Means. God indeed does often bring good out of evil, but he never does evil that good may come. For this would imply, that he is the Author of Sin in others, but sins not himself. That he co-operates with the Sinner to the effecting of Sin; but being God, he is not guilty. And it's plain Men of your Principles have said, "That the very same Sin, namely, Murder or Adultery, as it is the Work of God, the Author, Mover and Compeller, it is not a Crime; but as it is of Man, it is a great one."

Eutyclus. I do not believe that God's Decree doth compel any Man's Will to any thing so far, that he should do such a thing whether he would or no; but yet I believe God so disposeth and

worketh it, that it shall desire that which he would have done; and therefore Man hath still the Use of his Will; because whatsoever he doth, tho' necessitated by God, yet he doth it willingly.

Epenetus. A poor Shift indeed! The Privilege of a Voluntary Agent, consists in doing that which it desireth to do: But according to you, Man desireth the Thing, because it is to be done; yet it is not to be done, because he desireth it freely and without violence, but because it must be done by an Absolute Necessity. A Stone hath a Natural Propension to fall downward; yet because this Propension is restrain'd necessarily to this term, so that the Stone must needs fall down, it cannot be said to descend Voluntarily, in any Propriety of Speech. Is not this just a Man's Case, according to your Objection? A Man drinks, you grant, Voluntarily; yet his Will is so restrained by God's Decree to this Action, that it was not possible for him to omit it. What difference is there now, I pray you, between the Will of a Man, and the Will of a Stone? For, according to your Principles, I eat, drink or walk, with as much Necessity, as Lead sinketh downwards: God hath decreed that *that* should sink, and therefore it must; and so God hath decreed that I must walk a Mile, and therefore I must.

Eutychus. But does not the Scripture say, *Act. 17.* that, *In him we live, move, and have our being?* by which words we are taught, that all our Motions, of what kind soever, whether Natural or Moral, Vital or Rational, are not only *guided*, but also *caused* by God Himself. So that God being the First Cause of what we do, consequently whatsoever we do, we do necessarily in respect of him.

Epenetus. If God be a Necessary Cause of all our particular Actions, then our Actions, in reference to such and such Things that are sinful, must needs
imply

imply God to be the Author of our Obliquities For Instance, to Swear, in a Lawful Cause before a Magistrate, is no Sin, but a Religious Act of Duty, acknowledging God's Omniscience in the Truth of what we say. But to Forswear our selves either for Profit or Advantage, is an express Breach of Duty, a Violation of our Saviour's Command. Now then, if God be a Cause of this Action in reference to this Object, (as he must be if he be the Cause of every particular Action) it is impossible that your Doctrine should excuse God from Sin. Eating, in *Adam*, was a Natural Action, both for the Necessity and Comfort of Nature; but eating the forbidden Fruit, was a Sin; but you teach, that he could not have eat without God's special Determination. I shall endeavour, as briefly as I can, to shew how God is the Cause of all Things, yet not the Cause of Sin, yea, the Cause of all good Things, yet so as that many good things are Contingent also. For Example: God then is the First Cause that all Things do work, and that they do work in certain Kinds. Now this being granted, then God is the Cause that many Things are done Contingently; because by his appointment, one of the chiefest sorts of second Causes do work Voluntarily, and therefore Contingently, which has more than enough been proved before. This being rightly understood, will instruct us, not only that it may be so, but that also so it must be. For tho' God be the Necessary Cause of all good things, yet all such things are not Necessary Effects of him. For Instance: It is impossible that Man should do any good Thing without God, therefore God is a Cause Necessary to the Being of all Things effected by him; yet because many things done by the free Choice of Man, might as well have been omitted, (God no ways constraining him to them) these are not Necessary Effects

of God. The Reason is plain, because God hath Decreed that Man should work Voluntarily, having liberty to do one thing, as well as another, yet so, that God giveth him the Strength to do whatsoever he chuseth to do, and Ability to chuse what he will, without Limitation of his Choice; or else this were to take it away, and to make Man an Involuntary Agent. To make this plain by an Example: God hath given thee Strength of Body, he hath given thee also Ability to chuse in what Exercise thou wilt employ it; thou chusest perhaps to Run, or Walk: God then the Author of thy Strength, is the chief Cause of these Exercises, yet so as they are Contingent in Respect of him, because thou mightest have omitted them had'st thou pleased. By all which we may plainly see, how, and in what manner, God is the Principal Cause of all Things, of which he is capable to be a Cause; and yet many Things are Contingent, in Respect of him. This I hope being clear'd, I may with the more facility prove how, and in what sense, God is the Cause of all we do, and yet we our selves only the Cause of Sin. Now it is certain, God sustains us, when we are about our Sins; ev'n then, *in Him we Live, Move, and have our Being*, as well as when we are better Employ'd, God giveth that Strength by which we commit any Sin, yet so as he doth not necessitate or incline unto it, but we of our selves abuse it to Wickedness. God hath still the Part of a Creator, we only are sinful. I will illustrate what I have offered, by a familiar Comparison: Suppose a King should deliver to one of his Subjects, Men, Arms, and Amunition, that he may Fight for his Honour against his Enemies, yet his Subject should prove a Traytor, and use all his Sovereign's Strength against himself. Now tho' his Sovereign is a Cause, that he hath the Command, and beareth the Office of a Captain, yet you can't

can't say he is the Cause of his Treachery, the Offence is only the Captains, and the Injury and Wrong, is only the Sovereign's. This is just the Case between God and us ; God hath given us many excellent Faculties, both of Body and Soul, which he intended we should use to his Glory, in Obedience to his Commands ; that we should resist the Devil, both our Enemy, and his too ; yet we have most traiterously sided with Satan, have abused God's Gifts to His Dishonour, have been stubborn Rebels to him, when he did the Part of a Creator to us ; so likewise, Man only sinneth, God is dishonoured. The King indeed made his Subject able to Rebel against him, by delivering his Military Furniture unto him ; the greater Villain he, that did Rebel against him. So God made *Adam* indeed able to sin, but he never intended that he shou'd sin with that Ability. Hence you may learn, that of all our good Actions God is the first Cause, we the second ; but of all our evil Actions, we are the proper Cause, God is only the Condition, without whose Permission they are not.

Eutychus. But when we misplace our Affections upon an unlawful Object, it must be done by Choice and Election, and this it is that maketh us Sinners ; now this being an Act of the Will, it must suppose also the Concurrence of God.

Epenetus. This may be easily solved, by what has been said : God made *Adam* able to be willing to sin, but he made him not to will Sin : God set before him *Life and Death* : That he did chuse *Death*, was indeed by the Strength of that Will given him by God ; but God did not bind him to chuse *Death*, for that were a Contradiction, namely, a necessitated Choice. But Men of your Principles have said, " That God's first Constitution was, that some should be destined to eternal " Ruin. And to this End, their Sins were ordain-

“ ed; and desertion and denial of Grace, in order
 “ to their Sins. That Reprobates are compelled
 “ with a Necessity of Sinning, and so of Perish-
 “ ing, by this Ordination of God, and so com-
 “ pelled, that they cannot chuse but Sin and Perish.
 “ That it is Incomprehensible, yet believed by
 “ us, how it is Just to damn such as do not de-
 “ serve it. That by a Necessity of Divine Provi-
 “ dence, though not of Nature, the Fall of *Adam*
 “ did Necessarily happen: yea, that God made
 “ the Protoplasts to this very Purpose, that he
 “ might suffer them to be tempted, and led into
 “ Sin; and that by force of his Council or Decree,
 “ it could not otherwise be but that they must
 “ sin. That we cannot say of *Eſau* being reject-
 “ ed by God, I would to God, he had died an
 “ an Infant: For he could not die whom the Di-
 “ vine Providence created to this very End, that
 “ he might live, and that he might live wickedly,
 “ That God absolutely wills that Sin shall fall out,
 “ and that God doth determine it shall be done.
 “ That he did Voluntarily Decree it should fall out.
 “ That his Permissive Will of Sin is efficacious,” &c.

Eutychus. These are Horrible Assertions indeed!
 such as I can by no Means allow, because the Scrip-
 ture requires all Men to Believe in Christ for Salva-
 tion, and if they Believe not, they commit a most
 grievous Sin, *John* 16. 8, 9. *He will reprove the*
World of Sin, because they believe not on me.

Epenetus. Pray, Sir, do you think that God
 requireth Reprobates to Believe, as well as o-
 thers?

Eutychus. Yes, every Man, without exception;
 as well the Reprobate (a) “ as the Eleſt, (ſaith
 “ *Mr. Perkins*) tho’ for a different Reason; the

(a) *Perk. lib. de Prad. pag. 89. Obj. 3.*

“ Elect, that by Believing, he may be Saved ;
 “ the Reprobate, that by *not* Believing, he may
 “ be without Excuse : and this out of the very
 “ Purpose of God. ”

Epenetus. This must certainly be against the Justice of God ; because it maketh him require Faith in Christ, of those, to whom he hath precisely denied, by his Absolute Purpose, both a *Power* to Believe, and a *Saviour* to Believe in. For how can they Believe, if they be absolute Reprobates ? They want Faith, and they must want it for ever ; God hath decreed they shall never have any to their dying-day. For no Man can be justly ty'd to Impossible Performances ; because no Man can fly like a Bird, or reach Heaven with the top of his Finger : Therefore God cannot with Justice exact of any the Performance of these Actions ; nor can he, of Reprobates, the Obedience of Faith, if it be not possible to them. Again : Can any Man say, that it is God's serious Will that such a Man shall Live, when it is his Will that he shall never have the Concurrence of his Providence, and the Act of Preservation ? Will any Man say, that God doth Will in good-earnest that those Men should Believe, whom he will not furnish with necessary Power to Believe ? I'm certain, we may better say, it is God's unfeigned Will that they shall not Believe ; because it is his Will they shall want Power to Believe : For it is a Maxim in Logic, He who willeth a thing in the Cause, willeth the Effect that necessarily floweth from that Cause. Now if it be the certain Will of God, that Reprobates shall in no-wise Believe, he cannot with Reason and Equity tie them to Believe ; for that wou'd be to tie them to an Act contrary to his Determinate Will. But further : The Reprobates can't be ry'd to Believe ; because they have no Object of Faith, no Christ to Believe in. The Devils have
 no

no Part in Christ, or the New Covenant : Now can we say, that it wou'd be Just in God to bind them to Believe, or punish them as Transgressors of the Covenant for Believing not ? No more can we say, that God can justly require Faith of Reprobates, or destroy them for Believing not, when they have no more Part in Christ, or in the Covenant of Grace, than the Devils have. For you and your Party deny that Christ died for Reprobates ; calling it a Lye, to say he did die for them ; And can God justly bind Men to believe a Lye ? If a Man should command his Servant to Eat, and punish him for not Eating, and in the mean time fully resolve that he shall have no Meat to eat ; wou'd any reasonable Man say, that such a Man was Just in the Command, or Punishment. Change but the Name, and the Case is the same. For as Bishop *Usher* hath said, (a) “ What would not a
 “ Man fly unto, rather than yield that Christ died
 “ in no-wise for the Reprobates, and that none but
 “ the Elect had any kind of Title to Him ; and yet
 “ many thousand Reprobates should be bound in
 “ Conscience to believe that He died for them, and
 “ and tied to accept him for their Redeemer and
 “ Saviour, yea, and should be condemned to ever-
 “ lasting Torments, for want of such a Faith, (if
 “ we may call that Faith, which is not grounded
 “ on the Word of Truth) whereby they should
 “ have believed that, which in it self was most
 “ untrue, and laid hold of that, in which they had
 “ no kind of Interest. ” And how contrary would this be to the Spirit of our Blessed Saviour, who was too pitiful, and of too sweet a Disposition, to upbraid or jeer a poor Creature, much less to Punish him for being such as God had made him ;

(a) *The Primate's Judgment of the true Intent and Extent of Christ's Death*, pag. 24, 25, 26, 27.

or for being such as he must needs be, whether by *Fate and Destiny*, or by a *Natural Infirmary*. We read, our Saviour did indeed upbraid *Cborazin and Bethsaida*, (Mat. 11. 21.) because they repented not; which he could not have done, had it been impossible for them to Repent; for he tells them, *if the mighty Works which were done in them, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented in Sackcloth and Ashes*. Which was as much as to tell them, that it was not at all for want of *Means and Mercy* on God's Part, but for want of *Will* on theirs, that they did not do what was commanded to be done. And tho' he said it should be worse with them, than with *Tyre and Sidon* in the Day of Judgment, worse with *Capernaum*, than for *Sodom*, worse for the *Jews* than for the *Ninevites*; yet it is not because one had a greater Necessity of Sinning than the other, but because one was guilty of greater Contempt than the other; not because God had Absolutely Decreed a greater Punishment to the one, but because the one had Means of Sinning less than the other. Or else we should make God guilty in the same kind that we should be, who should upbraid a Stammerer for not speaking plain, or Reproach a Man, not for being willfully, but Naturally Blind. Nor ought any Man to be reproached for being *born Deaf*, but for being *like the deaf Adder that stoppeth her Ears*. He that bindeth my Feet, and then invites me to come unto him, intends nothing towards me, but a bitter Jest; for if he were serious, he would set my Feet at Liberty, that I might come in good earnest, and not say to me, as we do to a Child that is fallen down, [Come hither to me, and I will lift thee up.] Yet this is what Mr Calvin is fain to say, (being pinch't with that Text Ezek. 18. 23. *Have I any pleasure at all that the Wicked should die, and not that he should return from his ways and live.*) "That
" God

“ God wills not the Death of a Sinner, so far
 “ forth as he wills his Repentance; which Ex-
 “ perience teacheth us, he doth so Will, as not
 “ to touch his Heart that he may Repent: ” which
 is all one as to say, he wills it so, as to com-
 mand it: but he does not will it so, as to leave
 it possible; that is, he wills it in Shew, but not
 in Reality. Now dare we think, that the *Father*
of all Mercies, and God of all Consolation, who
spareth when we deserve Punishment, did Deter-
 mine us to Punishment, without any Respect to
 our Deservings? He that had Mercy upon wicked
Ahab, (1 Kings 21. 29.) meerly because of his At-
 trition, sure did not damn him Absolutely be-
 fore he had done Good or Evil, yea, ev'n be-
 fore the Foundations of the World were laid.
He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Chil-
dren of Men, Lam, 3. 33. much less doth he
 damn Men for his meer Will and Pleasure. When
 God doth execute a Temporal Punishment only
 upon those that have deserved it, he comes to it
 with Reluctancy, and therefore calls it *his strange*
Work, (Isai. 28. 21.) a *Work* he loves not to be
 acquainted with: a *Work* which he doth sometimes
 execute, because he is just, but still unwillingly be-
 cause he is Merciful, Lam. 3. 33. and therefore he so
 expresses it, as we are wont to do a thing we are
 not used to, and know not how to set about it.
 Hosea 11. 8, 9. *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?*
how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make
thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim?
Mine Heart is turned within me; my repentings
are kindled together. And again: *I will not exe-*
cute the fierceness of mine Anger, for I am God,
and not Man.

Eutychus. There is a Text of Scripture just now
 occurs to my Memory, which seems to make against
 what you have said; it is *John* 12. 39, 40. *There-*
fore

fore they could not believe, because that *Esaïas* said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart ; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, &c. Now does not this imply the Impossibility of their Believing ; or else God's Foreknowledge in that Particular must be defective ?

Epenetus. Not at all ; for it does not follow from these Words, that there was an *Absolute Necessity* of their not Believing ; but only according to the Hebrew Phrase, that they *did not* Believe : Which Phrase is used in many places of Scripture, not to denote the Impossibility of a Thing's being done, but only that it was not done, or not convenient or necessary that it should be done, as *Gen.* 19. 22. where it is said to *Lot*, that *Sodom* could not be destroy'd 'till he was come into *Zoar*. Which only signifies, that God *did not* destroy it 'till then, for he cou'd have destroy'd it before ; which none can deny. The like Phrase is used in *Mark* 6. 5. *And he could there do no mighty work*, &c. Which only implies that he *did not* ; for he had Power to work, if he had pleased. The like we meet with in *John* 5. 19. — *The Son can do nothing of himself* : — that is, as I humbly conceive, he doth not. And that those words in *St. John* chap. 12. 39. — *They could not believe*, are so used, is plain from the words following, namely, *because that Esaïas said again*. For that Prophet's Prediction was not the Cause of their Unbelief, any more than an Almanack is the Cause of the Eclipse which it foretelleth ; but only a Sign or Argument, or an infallible Token of its Event. Neither doth the word [*That*] always denote the End or Final Cause of the Thing spoken of, but often referreth to the meer Consequent or Event. As when *St. Paul* saith, *Rom.* 5. 20. *the Law entred, [that] the Offence might abound* ; he cannot

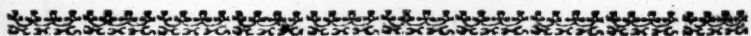
cannot possibly mean, that the abounding of the Offence, or encrease of Wickedness, was the very End or final Cause for which the Law was intended by God Almighty ; far be it from us to speak, or ev'n think so wickedly : but only, that it was the Event or Consequent of God's giving the Law, as that by which it received its Aggravation. For, as the same Apostle saith, Rom. 5. 13. *Sin is not imputed when there is no Law.*

Eutychus. Methinks I begin to be affected with what you have said, but there are many more Obstacles in my way, which hinder my embracing your Notions. And as to what you said last, — but lest I should be too troublesome at this time, I beg the Favour of a further Debate on this Point, when your Occasions will permit, and at present I take my Leave of you.

The End of the Third Conference.



CONFERENCE IV.



Eutychus.

MY good Friend, I am glad of having the Happiness once more to see you ; I am exceedingly obliged to you for all your Kindnesses ; and in particular, for the long Trouble I gave you Yesterday.

Epenetus. I wish I were capable of being more truly serviceable to you than I am : But assure your

your self, my best Endeavours shall not be wanting.

Eutychus. I shall be still farther in your Debt for any Time you shall spend with me. You were always very kind, which makes me take this Freedom of disclosing my Objections to you.

Epenetus. Pray, what was that you were going to make, when we were last together?

Eutychus. It was this: May not God speak in the Scripture in such a Phrase, as that he may not desire to be understood by wicked Men? nay, the Scripture is and will be a killing Letter unto them.

Epenetus. I believe it is killing to them only thro' their own Obstinacy; but not at all thro' the Design and Intent of God's speaking to them: And as for God's desiring to be understood by wicked Men, let me ask you, whether God doth not desire they should repent and live? *Ezek.* 18. 23. & 33. 11. Is there not Joy in Heaven at the Conversion of such? *Luke* 15. 7. And came not Christ into the World to call Sinners to Repentance? And is not all this, a Willingness to be understood by them? Certainly God doth desire seriously the Repentance of a Sinner, so long as he offers him the Means of Repentance, which he never deprives him totally of, until after a long Impenitence, he finally gives him over, as he did *Pharaoh* after the Sixth Judgment wrought for his Conversion.

Eutychus. Sir, since you interpret Scripture so well, what do you think of that Passage in *Isaiah* 46. 10. *My Counsel shall stand, and I will do all my Pleasure?*

Epenetus. I do not think from hence, that God hath decreed all Things whatsoever Men or Devils do; nor doth the Words say so. But only, that he effecteth all Things which he decrees, which

which must needs be good, if he decrees them. But to ordain Man to the Bottomless-Pit, without any Regard to his Sins, but only because he will have it so, I have sufficiently proved to be contrary ev'n both to the *Will* and *Pleasure* of the Almighty, and therefore cannot be meant in those Words just cited.

Eutychus. But is it not said, *Rom. 9. 11.* For the Children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the Purpose of God, according to Election, might stand, not of Works, but of him that calleth? &c. And may we not see from these Words, that nothing is the Cause of Election, but the Will of God's good Pleasure, and that *Esau* was rejected merely for God's good Pleasure?

Epenetus Those Words, I take to mean only, God's chusing the Jews, the Seed of *Jacob*, to be his Elect and Peculiar People, unto whom God vouchsafed many Temporal Blessings, such as *delivering unto them the Oracles of God*, and as of whom, according to the *Flesh*, *Christ* came: Privileges not granted to the Posterity of *Esau*; but by no means implying, that either the Person of *Esau*, or his Posterity, were by an Absolute Decree doom'd to Eternal Condemnation, and that without Consideration of the least or greatest Sin committed by them. To grant this, would be to make God a meer Deluder of miserable Men, calling them to Salvation in the Name of his Son, exhorting them by his Word and Ministry; yet, at the same time, altho' he pretendeth their Good, he fully intendeth their Ruin. Beside, the Ministers also of this Word must be False-Witnesses, if your Notion be true; because they, by their Ministry, offer Salvation Conditionally to many whose Damnation is determined Absolutely. Now, if the Word and Ministry offer

fer Salvation Conditionally, and you wou'd prove by this Scripture, in your Objection, That God by his Decree, hath ordained Salvation and Damnation without any Condition; may not Reprobates justly complain, "Lord, do'st thou punish us for not believing in thy Son, when thou didst call us to believe by the Preaching of thy Word? But why? thou didst decree to leave us (woful Men!) in *Adam's Sin*, to give us neither Power to believe, nor a Christ to believe in. How canst thou justly charge us with Sin, or encrease our Punishment for not believing in him, whom thou didst resolve before the World was, that we should never believe in?" So likewise the Sacraments, by this Opinion, do signify nothing, seal nothing, confer nothing, to such as are not saved, but are meer Blanks, and empty Ordinances to them at the best; not thro' the Fault of the Men, but by the Primary and Absolute Will of God. But it's certain, our Church is not of this Barbarous Opinion; for she commands her Ministers, in her Communion Office, to tell All, without Exception, that Christ dy'd for *Them*; saying, at the delivering the Bread, — *Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for [Thee,] &c.* Now it is very plain, That she means the Reprobate as well as the Elect, or else it would be to command her Ministers to deliver the Sacrament with a Lye in their Mouths; unless you will allow, that every one that eateth the Bread and Wine, are precious Vessels of Election, which I believe, you'll hardly do; it being too melancholy a Truth, that many eat unworthily, and so are guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord. But to proceed, this Principle renders all God's other Gifts, of what Kind or Quality soever, to those that receive them, Unprofitable, (ev'n in God's Absolute Intention,)

being such, as shall never do them good, in reference to their Eternal Condition: Nay, not only Unprofitable, but Hurtful too, given them not out of Love, but extream Hatred; not that they might use them well, and be blessed in so doing, but that they might use them ill, and so procure to themselves the greater Damnation: Nay, it wickedly inferreth, That God lifteth them up to the Pinnacle of the Temple, (as the Devil did Christ,) that so they may fall the lower, He loadeth them with Knowledge and other excellent Endowments, that with the Weight of them, he might sink them down to Hell: These are, and must be the Consequences of Absolute and Irrespective Election and Reprobation, making God's Gifts Snares to entrap Mens Souls. For Men that have them, have little Cause to be proud of them, and less Reason to be thankful, or love the Giver of them, but rather to hate him, because they are giftless Gifts, of the same Nature with a griping Usurer's Bounty, or a Bait for a poor Fish, which he swallows with a Hook to boot.

Eutychus. But the End that God aims at, is his own Glory; for he made all things for himself, neither could any Man challenge any thing from him; he may give, or with-hold his Gifts, when, and to whomsoever he pleaseth, without any Injustice; Therefore he was pleased (says the Assembly of Divines at *Westminster*,) according to the Unsearchable Counsel of his own Will, whereby he extendeth or with-holdeth Mercy as he pleaseth, for the Glory of his Sovereign Power over his Creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to Dishonour and Wrath for their Sin, to the Praise of his glorious Justice.

Epenetus. I find you still allow the whole Matter of Reprobation, [as well touching the Things

Things decreed, as touching the Act of God Decreeing,] to be finally resolved into God's meer Pleasure, to shew his Sovereign Power; for you say, he makes a Law to bind Men to repent and believe, upon Pain of Damnation; and this Law he makes for his meer Pleasure: You affirm also, that he Decrees to deny Sufficient and Necessary Grace to enable Men to repent and believe, and this of his meer Pleasure too; and from hence, it doth unavoidably follow, that he doth ordain Sin, and the Introduction of it, as the Means of Damnation, and that of his meer Pleasure too.

Eutyclus. God may give what Laws he please; for his Sovereignty is Absolute, his Dominion Uncontroulable, he is Bound to none, and gives Account of his Actions to none.

Epenetus. Sir, Tho' 'tis impossible God should be obliged to his Creature, whether upon the Account of any Law made by it, or of any Benefit receiv'd from it; yet the very Nature of God, and that Natural Equity most eminent in him, God esteems as a Law to himself, and doth never transgress the Dictates of it. Now God having entred freely into Covenant with his Creatures, by giving them a Law, and making them a Promise; this Law could not, in strict Justice, have been Obligatory, if God's own Natural Equity had not engaged him to bestow Strength and Ability to keep it: So likewise, as to the Promise, if he promise a Thing Absolutely, he binds himself Absolutely to perform it; if he promise a Thing Conditionally, the Condition being fulfilled he is tied upon the Honour of his Veracity and Justice, to make the Promise good, *Mat. 25. 24. Heb. 6. 10. 1 John 1. 9.* And if there be no Promise made, what Encouragement have we to set about any Duty? Ev'n Prayer itself, without a Promise, would be useless and insignificant.

Eutychus. But doth not the Apostle say, *Rom. 9. 16. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth Mercy?*

Epenetus. The Apostle does not here speak of Salvation or Election unto Glory; but of giving the Gospel, and calling Men unto Christianity. Now it is plain, the *Gentiles* were in no Capacity, much less in any Forwardness to enquire after it, 'till God was pleased to give it them by Revelation, as the Apostle observes from the Prophet, *Rom. 10. 20. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.* Hear what *Mr. Baxter* himself saith of this Passage, "That the Meaning is not, that

"our Salvation is not in him that willeth, or
 "in him that runneth: The Apostle talketh of
 "no such Thing; but it is about the giving of
 "the Gospel to them that had it not, and taking it
 "from them that had forfeited it by their Sin." Neither doth the Gospel offer Salvation to any, but such as both *Will* and *Run* too, which is apparent from such Exhortations as these, *Heb. 12. 1. — And let us run with Patience the Race that is set before us. 1 Cor. 9. 24. So run that ye may obtain.* And such as desist, faint, or step aside from the Course of Christianity, are reprehended for it, *Gal, 5. 7. Ye did run well, who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the Truth?* There is the same Reason also for our *Willingness*, which the Scripture inculcates with no less Importunity; insomuch that it is said, *Rev. 22. 17. Whosoever [will,] let him take the Water of Life freely.* And, *John 7. 17. If any Man will do his [God's] Will, he shall know, &c.* And such as remain in Unbelief, are reproved upon this Account, because they *would not come to Christ, John 5. 40. They would not be gathered to Christ,*
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Reprobation, fully Detected. 85

Mat. 23. 37. Now, if God's Purpose were to shew Mercy and Salvation to us, without our *Willing* and *Running*, why did he give us those Laws and Abilities? and so earnestly exhort us to a Performance of them: *To walk worthy of our Calling: To give diligence to make our Calling and Election sure: To work out our own Salvation with fear and trembling?* Eph. 4. 1. 2 Pet. 1. 10. Phil. 2. 12.

Eutychus. But I am apt to believe, there is something more in the Apostle's Meaning, else why doth he silence all Objections against this great Point, with his, *Nay, but, O Man, who art thou, that repliest against God?* Rom. 9. 20. He resolves the whole Reason of this Affair into the Will of God, and would have us dispute no further.

Epenetus. The Apostle only useth that Expression, to stop the Mouths of any bold or insolent Objector against God's Will, why he determined of his meer Pleasure to Save the *Gentiles* for their Believing, or to Reprobate the *Jews* for their not Believing: For the Apostle gives a clear Decision of that Point, *ver. 30, 31, 32.* Not according to that Principle of an Irrespective Election and Reprobation, but upon Account of Faith and Unbelief Respectively. For he proves, that such as were now rejected from the Lot of God's People, *were broken off, because of their Unbelief*; and that such as were Elected to it, did *stand by Faith*, Rom. 11. 20. And this is to be resolved wholly into the Arbitrament of God's Will, who was freely pleased thus to determine and ordain touching the Sons of Men; *That whosoever believeth, should have eternal Life: He that believeth not, should be condemned*, John 3. 16, 18, 36. So that the Prescription of Faith unto Salvation, is therefore of the Free-will of God alone, who was graciously pleas'd to appoint it on such Terms.

Eutychus. I have been taught, that Faith and Holiness are not the Cause of our Election, and that we are chosen unto Salvation and Glory, not as Holy or Believers, but to the End we may be made such; according to that of the Apostle, *Eph. 1. 4. He hath chosen us in Christ, before the Foundation of the World, that we should be Holy and without Blame, before him in Love.*

Epenetus. I never said, that Faith and Holiness were absolutely the Cause of our Salvation, but a Necessary Condition, as I have elsewhere shewn; for the Scripture very frequently ascribes the Name of the Effect, to the Counsel or Decree it self, as you may observe in those Texts, *2 Tim. 1. 9. Titus 1. 2. Ephes. 2. 5, 6.* And the Apostle's Words before cited, may be interpreted of God's chusing us *through Christ*, unto a State of Grace, to the End we may lead a holy Life. For, as I formerly told you, Election is properly an Act of Judgment; a preferring of the better before the worse. For those that are in Christ (by what Means whatsoever) are Absolutely better than those that are out of Christ, (by what Means soever;) and if so, then God's Electing some, *as consider'd in Christ*, and rejecting others, *as consider'd out of him*, plainly shews, that God chuseth the better before the worse. He chose *St. Peter* and *St. Paul*, &c. whom he foreknew would believe, because out of his meer Pleasure and gracious Will he would save Believers.

Eutychus. But the Apostle tells us, *2 Thes. 3. 2. All Men have not Faith*; and, in *Titus 1. 1.* He makes Faith a Thing proper to the Elect only, calling it *the Faith of God's Elect*.

Epenetus. The Faith there meant by the Apostle, if rightly understood, signifies no other than the Christian Faith in general; which every one is bound to believe; and not the Virtue of Faith, by

by which we do believe ; as you may see, *ver. 4.* of this very Chapter, *To Titus mine own Son,* after the common Faith, &c. and *Jude*, *ver. 3.* *Ad 6. 7. Rom. 1. 5.* Neither are we to understand by the word *Elect* in that Place, such Persons as were from all Eternity chosen Absolutely, and by Name, to Glory ; for if we say, they were elected to Glory before they did believe, because the word *Elect* is first in Propriety of Speech, then, by the same Parity of Reason, Holiness and Sanctity goeth before Faith ; because we read, *Rev. 13. 10. Here is the Patience and the Faith of the Saints.* And, in *St. Jude's Epistle, ver. 3.* *Contend for the Faith which was once deliver'd unto the Saints.* And we might with equal Authority conclude, that *Vocation* doth precede Election, because, *Rev. 17. 14.* they are said to be called, and chosen, and faithful. So that by the word *Elect*, in that Place, we may understand such as are Elect to Grace, or called unto the Faith by a gracious and divine Election, and obey that Call: For the word *Elect* is not always a Participle, but sometimes a Noun, and such a Noun as both in the Old and New Testament denote some excellent and remarkable Quality ; by reason whereof, a Thing is said to be *Elect* ; for Example, *Jer. 22. 7.* and *Ezek. 31. 16. Elect or Choice Trees*, for their Tallness. *1 Sam. 26. 2.* and *Jer. 48. 15. Elect or Chosen Men*, for their Valour. *2 King 3. 19. Elect or Choice Cities*, for their Strength and Beauty. And in this Sense it is, that Men are called *Elect* or *Chosen Men*, in regard of their Probity of Mind, and their Readiness in assenting to those Rules and Laws prescribed by the Gospel. They may be also called the *Elect* of God, in regard of their Constancy of Faith, and their Exemplary Obedience among the rest of the Faithful. The Proof of which, you may

see in those Places of Holy Scripture, *Mat.* 24. 31. *Mark* 13. 27. *Luke* 18. 7. *2 Tim.* 2. 10. *Rom.* 8. 33. *Col.* 3. 12. *Rev.* 17. 14.

Eutychus. But it is said, *Eph.* 1. 5. That we are *predestinated according to the good Pleasure of his Will*; which plainly shews, that our Salvation is Irrespective, and without any Condition.

Epenetus. This word [*good Pleasure*] doth not signify the Absoluteness, but the Respectiveness of his Will, because it relateth to something in which God is well-pleased, and that is, in Christ. It being impossible for God to please himself with Mankind, or for Men to be acceptable or well-pleasing to God, any otherwise than in Him, of whom it is said, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*, as I have formerly proved. And if you'll allow the Scripture to be true, then you must allow the Promises therein, all of them, to run Conditional, such as *Job.* 8. 51. *If a Man keep my saying, he shall never see death.* *Gal.* 6. 7, 9. *Whatsoever a Man soweth, that shall he also reap.* *Rev.* 3. 20. *If any Man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him &c.* And, *We shall reap if we saine not.* So likewise the Threatnings of God are not in Jest. For, *Depart from me, ye Cursed*, was not foretold as a Bugbear to scare Children withal, but that every one might beware, and not bring himself under that Sentence. He cannot be willing that any should be caught in the Serpent's Snare, who has shewed to All, without Exception, a Way to escape. Christ's Invitations are serious, He would have every one come in at the Preaching of his Word. And as he *died for all*, so he earnestly desires that *all* may be saved, and shews it is our own fault if we are not.

Eutychus. I believe, that Wicked Men are the Cause of their own Misery; for the Will is determini-

terminated to an Object two Ways: 1st, By Compulsion, against the Bent and Inclination of it. 2^{dly}, By Necessity, according to the Natural desire and liking of it. And by this last only it is, that God's Predestination determineth the Will to Sin; it forceth no Man to do that which he would not, but only carries him towards that which he would. For tho' it be true, when Men Sin, they cannot chuse; yet, it is as true, they will not chuse.

Epenetus. This fine Turn, is nothing at all to the Purpose; for I have been told, that Authors make no Distinction between these two words, *Necessity*, and *Compulsion*, but used them in this Argument promiscuously; denying that God did Necessitate Men to Sin, lest they should grant him hereby to be the Author of Sin. For that which Necessitates the Will to Sin, is as truly the Cause of Sin, as that which forceth it; because it maketh the Sin inevitably to be committed, which otherwise might be avoided. Nay, that which Necessitates the Will to Sin, is more truly the Cause of Sin, than the Will it self, because it over-ruleth the Will, and taketh from it its true Liberty, by which it should be Lord of it self, and Disposer of its own Actions; making it become but a servile Instrument, irresistibly subject to Superior Command and Determination; and consequently must be a truer Cause of all such Acts and Sins, as proceed from a Will so determined, than the Will is. For when two Causes concur to the producing of an Effect, the one a Principal over-ruling Cause, the other but Instrumental and wholly at the Decision of the Principal, then is the Effect, in all reason, to be imputed to the Principal, which by the force of its Influx and Impression produceth it, rather than to the Subordinate and Instrumental, which is but a meer Servant in the Production

tion of it. We find it ordinary in Scripture, to ascribe the Effect of Subordinate or Voluntary Acting, to the Principal Agent: As *Mat. 10. 20. It is not ye that speak (saith Christ) but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you. 1 Cor. 15. 10. I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the Grace of God which was in me. And Gal. 2. 20. I live, (saith the Apostle;) yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.* But further, that which maketh a Man Sin, by way of Necessity only, that is, with, and not against his Will, is the Cause of his Sin, in a worse manner than that which constraineth him to Sin against his Will; as he which by powerful Perswasions draweth a Man to stab, hang, or poyson himself, is in a grosser manner the Cause of that Evil and unnatural Action, than he that by Force compelleth him; because he maketh him to consent to his own Death. So likewise, if God's Decree do not only make Men Sin, but Sin willingly too; not only *cause* that they shall [*malè agere*] *do evil*, but [*malè velle*] *will it too*, it hath the deeper hand in the Sin.

Eutychus. Sir, I don't think that God Predestinates Sin, as it is Sin, but as a Means of declaring His Justice, in the Punishment of wicked Men, and so is not the Author of Sin.

Epenetus. I remember a Passage, *Rom. 6. 1. to this purpose, That we must not do Evil that Good may come.* From whence we may learn, that a good Intention cannot, alone, make a bad Action good; it remaineth evil, tho' the End aim'd at be never so good. So that the End, Manner, yea, and Matter too, must be good, or else the Action is naught. For Example: He that shall steal that he may give an Alms, or oppress the Poor to teach them Patience, or kill a wicked Man, that he may do no more hurt with his Example; I say, tho' his End he aimeth at be never so good, he sinneth notwithstanding,

withstanding. The Reason is plain, because the Evil of Sin, is greater than any Good that can come by Sin; because Sin is an Affront and Wrong done to the Majesty of God, and so directly Prejudicial to His Glory as any thing can be. Whosoever therefore willet a Sin, tho' for never-so good an End, he willet that which is truly and formally a Sin; and consequently, tho' we should grant, that God wills Sin, for Ends never-so good, yet willing it with such a Powerful and Effectual Will, as giveth a Necessary Being to it, he becometh Author of that which is formally Sin. Beside, this Distinction fastneth upon God a further Aspersion, and loadeth him with these Indignities, namely, a want of Wisdom, Sincerity, and Mercy. Of Wisdom, in that his Counsels must needs be weak, if he can find out no Means, to Glorifie His Justice, but by the bringing Sin into the World, which *his Soul hateth*, and appointing Men to commit it, that so he may manifest forth his Justice in punishing them for it. Want of Sincerity and Plain-dealing with Men, in that God having decreed and appointed Men, by his Absolute Will, to Eternal Perdition, does also decree that they should Sin, that so they might be damned for those very Sins which he decreeth and draweth them into; and so dissembleth, because he slaughtereth them under a specious shew of Justice, in punishing them for their Sins, when at the same time they are what he had in his Eternal Counsel appointed for their Ruine. Just as I have heard it reported of *Tiberius*, who having a Purpose to put *Drusus* and *Nero* to Death, (the two Sons of *Germanicus*) used sundry cunning Contrivances, to Cause them to revile him, that so he might find occasion against them, to put them to Death: And herein is justly censured for his great Hypocrisy. Again, want of Mercy, in a high degree; just as if God delighted
so

so in Blood, that rather than not destroy Mens Souls, he will have them live and die in Sin, that he may destroy them. Like to those Pagan Princes, of whom it is reported, "That they were afraid that all should be Just (meaning the Christians) lest they should have none to punish: But this is the Disposition of hang-men rather than of good Princes." And shall we dare to cast these foul Enormities (especially this latter) upon the God of Truth and Father of Mercies? God forbid!

Eutychus. But we must make a Distinction between a Thing brought to pass, as an Effect flowing from something as the Cause thereof; as you know the stinking of an impure Dunghil proceedeth from the Sun's shining upon it; and yet the Sun is not the Cause of those impure Vapours that ascend, but the Dunghil it self. Now as the stinking of the Dunghil is a Consequent, but not an Effect of the Shining of the Sun; so Sin is a Consequent of Reprobation, but not an Effect of it: and in this respect it is that God worketh upon the Wills of the Reprobates, or stirs them up to unjust Acts.

Epenetus. Just now you said, That Sin must be the Cause of Punishment, in order to vindicate God's Justice in Damning the Sinner; and now you say, That Reprobation goeth before, and Sin followeth as a Consequent: Two Absurdities which has been sufficiently answer'd already; however, I shall consider this last Objection as briefly as I can. 1st, As to your Similitude of the Sun's drawing up nasty Vapours from an impure Dunghil, it is quite beside the Purpose, because the Dunghil is supposed to be, before the shining of the Sun, and is sure to stink, whether the Sun doth shine or not; whereas God's Impulse is suppos'd to be, before the Sin, and decreed so to be from all Eternity. 2^{dly}, The shining of the Sun, is a Universal Cause; shining

ning as much on the Diamond and every Thing else within its Horizon, as upon the Dunghil; whereas your Doctrine teaches, that God's Impulse to do Evil, is particular; more, in compelling *Shimei* to curse *David*, and *Feroboam* to rebel, than on any other Persons who had none of that Impulse, or at least not so much. 3dly, The shining of the Sun, intends not the Corruption, so properly as the Heat of the Dunghil; whereas the Impulse you speak of, must signify and intend the Thing itself: And tho' we should grant the Sun to be particular in its Cause, yet, in corrupting other Things, it would not be corrupted it self, because it doth act as an Involuntary Agent, doing all that it doth by a meer Necessity, which it receiveth from God's Absolute Decree; whereas the Impulse you speak of, is ascribed to God as a Free Agent, and by consequence, to his Choice; unless you will say, that God is Necessitated, or doth of Necessity compel Men to do wickedly; which will make your Cause so much the worse. 5thly, The Dunghil is meerly Passive, as to every Thing that is done unto it; and whatsoever ill Vapours proceed from it, it sends them forth of Necessity, without Election or Voluntary Consent; whereas, the Sinner doth chuse to send forth Sin, and might have forborn, if he had not been wilful; for if he had not been a Free Agent, he could not have been a Sinning one: *Isa. 65. 12. Therefore (saith God) will I number you to the Sword, and ye shall bow down to the Slaughter; because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear, but did evil before mine Eyes, and did chuse that wherein I delighted not.*

Eutychus. Sir, I have been told, that God wisheth the Salvation of the Reprobate Seriously, but not Absolutely.

Epenetus. It is true, God doth not Will the Salvation of all Absolutely, or as a Thing which he

he resolveth undoubtedly shall come to pass, ev'n by using all his Power to accomplish; for then all must be saved whether they would or no; but he wisheth the Salvation of All, only upon Condition they will Repent and Believe.

Eutychus. Why, this is exactly my Belief; for wicked Men do certainly perish, for not performing the Condition of the Covenant of Grace; God being *candid* and *sincere* in his Offers of Salvation ev'n to the Reprobate, as well as the Elect.

Epenetus. It so, then I hope you'll allow, That the Condition must be possible to them to whom the Promise is made; and the Performance of the Condition must be a part of God's Will, as well as the Salvation promised; or else I'm sure the Promise cannot be *candid* and *sincere*. For a Condition is the Offer of a Power of Choice; now, where there is no Liberty of Choice afforded, there is no true Condition appointed. The Lawyers tell us, Contracts made under impossible Conditions, are no Bargains. And the Logicians Rule is, That a Conditional Proposition which hath an Impossible Condition annexed to it, is equivalent to a bare Negation. It is all one, for me to offer a Piece of Money to one Blind, upon Condition he will open his Eyes, and tell me what Piece of Money it is, and whose Stamp it beareth, and to deny it flatly to another; for the one can have it no more than the other: Nay, it is in Circumstance a great deal worse; for it is a Denial under Colour of the contrary, a Denial joyned with a Scoff. Just as if the King should make an Act, (not to be repealed,) That no *Frenchmen* should be made Citizens of *London*, or Free Denizens of the Kingdom, and then make a Decree, to grant some noble Privileges to the Citizens of *London*, or to Subjects of the Kingdom only, and to none but them; and yet for all this, should command it to be Proclaimed, that he will give them
to

to the *Frenchmen*, upon Condition, they will be made Freemen of *London*, or be Incorporated into the Kingdom: Would not any Man say, That the King, in this Case, did dissemble, delude, and tantalize the poor *Frenchmen*? And if any one should say, there would be no dissembling in it; for if they would become Citizens, or Subjects, they should have the promised Gratuities; any Man might truly answer, that the King doth indeed counterfeit and mock them, because he maketh a Tender to them, upon a Condition not possible by his own Decree. In like manner, if God hath made a Decree, that such and such Men shall never believe, and yet offer them Heaven on Condition of believing; it may most truly be said, that God doth not only deny them Heaven, but deny it with a bitter Derision; which is far from that Candor and Goodness that dwelleth in him; But I must confess, very agreeable to Men of your Principles; who tell the World, "That God must needs some way, both Will and Work in the Sin of the Act; because, not only the Action it self, but the very Pravity and Deformity of it, makes way for God's Glory: That as Sin makes for his Glory, he hath a Hand in effecting it: And that Sin by Accident makes much for his Glory: That God did decree the Sin of *Adam*, and that his Sin was therefore Necessary: That God intends his Gospel should harden Mens Hearts, and close their Eyes, and shut their Ears, and that he sends it for this very Purpose: Yea, that all the Sins which are committed by Men, God hath a secret Working Hand, the chief Hand too." Which, if true, we need not wonder how *John Sheppard* broke out of *Newgate*.

Eutychus. Sir, I must confess, I have often stagger'd in this Point, but I am told, that God, who is Sovereign Lord of all his Creatures, who
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being his own, may without any Injustice, do with them, and dispose of them, for what End and Purpose he pleases.

Epenetus. To this, I have said something already, yet I am willing to give you Satisfaction, if possible: Now the Question is not, what an Almighty Sovereign Power *can* do with his poor Vassals, but, what a Power that is Good and Just *will* do. For tho' in respect to his Absolute Power and Sovereignty, (if separated from his Goodness and Justice,) he might destroy his Creatures, without any Respect to their good or bad Actions, yet it is incompatible with a God clothed with Infinite Goodness and Mercy, to appoint Men to Hell, of his meer Will and Pleasure. All Things are indeed possible with God; but yet God cannot do that which implies a Contradiction. He, who out of Nothing, created All Things, can (if he please) turn All Things into Nothing again: But he cannot so make Things out of Nothing, so as they shall be Nothing still: He can draw Good out of Evil, by disposing of Evil to Good Ends, but he cannot so make Evil Good, as that the Evil shall still retain its own Nature. God can determine the Will of Man, to this, or that only, and so deprive the Will of that Part of its Nature; but not so, as that the Will shall continue undeprived, or retain its Nature, of which it is deprived, ev'n at the same Time it is deprived of it. When God determines a Man to one Thing, it is certain he cannot do another; for if he can, he can resist, not God's Will only, but his Power too. These are some of the Things which implies a Contradiction, and therefore not to be imputed to God, who if he could be guilty of them, would cease to be God. The Scripture tells us, that God is good to All: How can he then, of himself, without any Motive in the reasonable Creature, provide for it from Everlasting,

fling, the most insuperable Torments; yea, ev'n before he thought of bestowing any the least Good upon it? Hear what St. *Austin* has said on this Matter, who is thus quoted: (a) "God is Good, " and God is Just. He may, without any Desert, " free Men from Punishment, because he is Good; " but he cannot Condemn any Man without Evil " Deserts, because he is Just."

Eutychus. Sir, I believe God may with less Injustice damn his Creatures for nothing, than annihilate them for nothing; because he that wants a Being, enjoyeth no Good; but he that is tormented in Hell, hath a Being, and by consequence, something that is Good: If therefore, God may take away a Man's Life that is Innocent, and turn him into Nothing for his Pleasure, much more may he torment him in Hell.

Epenetus. This is contrary to our Blessed Saviour's Saying to *Judas*: *Wo unto that Man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed: it had been good for that Man, if he had not been born.* From whence it is plain, that first the Misery of *Judas* is set forth in these Words, *Wo be unto, &c.* and then the greatness of his Misery, *it had been good, &c.* As if our Lord had said, *Judas* the Traytor shall be damned, and so deplorable shall his Condition be, that it had been good and happy for him, if he had never received a Being at all. Good, without a Figure, good in earnest. For where shall we find a Man that would not chuse to vanish into a Thousand Nothings, rather than be cast Soul and Body into Hell? Why, are Men so afraid of Hell when they lie upon the brink of Eternity,

(a) *Aug. l. 3. cont. Julian, c. 31. pag. 164.* Bonus est Deus, Iustus est Deus, potest aliquem sine bonis meritis liberare, quia bonus est: Non potest quenquam sine malis meritis damnare, quia Iustus est.

being touched with a Sense of their Sins, and the fearful Expectation of Eternal Vengeance? Why, I say, do they then, with *Job*, curse the very Day of their Birth, and with a thousand times over they had never been Born, or might cease to be, rather than come into the place of Torments: but because they judge a being there, incomparably worse, than not to be at all? Indeed, This Opinion would be an Encouragement to *Atheists* and *Epicures*; for if they sooth themselves up in their Riot and Excess, and practise the most impious and voluptuous Courses, upon a Perswasion that their Souls shall die with their Bodies; how much more would they pursue their Carnal and Sinful Pleasures, being once brought to believe, That after all their sensual Delights, they shall after Death, be in a better Case, than if they had no Being at all? But ev'n common Sense will expose this Opinion, which judgeth Pains when they are extreme, to be worse than Death. Hence it is, that *Job* being tormented in his Body by the Devil, cursed his Birthday, magnified the Condition of the Dead, and wished himself in the Grave; plainly preferring the loss of his Being, before that miserable Being he then had. How many Men, if they were put to their Option, would chuse rather to have no Bodies at all, than such as are always tormented with the Stone, or the Gout, or any other sharp or sensible Disease? It is a known Saying, grounded on this Judgment of Sense, *Præstat semel quàm semper mori*; Better it is to die once, than to be always dying. This the cruel Persecutors of the Primitive Christians knew very well, and therefore those on whom they were willing to exercise their Cruelty, they put to *lingering Deaths*, accounting present Death too light a Punishment for them. And when one desired his Tormentor quickly to dispatch him, his Answer was, *I am not yet Friends with thee.*

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Eutyclus. Sir, it is time to think of Parting; I return you a thousand Thanks for the Satisfaction I have received from your Discourse hitherto: Pray God send us another Meeting, that so I may have an Opportunity of laying before you, those other Impediments which keep me still at a Distance from uniting in your Principles.

Epenetus. Amen. *How pleasant a thing is it for Brethren to dwell together in Unity?* Psal. 133. And how sweet is that Musick, wherein there is not the least Discord?

Eutyclus. Shall I see you again at my House to Morrow?

Epenetus. God willing, I shall wait on you.

Eutyclus. Good Night.

The End of the Fourth Conference.



C O N F E R E N C E V.



Epenetus.

SIR, I am glad to see you so well again; I understood by a Friend of mine, (as I came to see you,) that you was taken very ill, after I left you last Night.

Eutyclus. I thank you very kindly: I was something out of Order last Night, being very much afflicted with the Vapours, but I bless God, I am pretty well come to my self again to Day. Pray, Sir, why do you stand?

Epenetus. Seeing I am now fate down; if your Head be not too much disturb'd and out of order, by your Indisposition last Night, we'll go on with our Conference touching our former Subject?

Eutyclus. With all my Heart; a happy Opportunity.

Epenetus. Pray, Sir, relate what you have to say, against uniting with me in Principle.

Eutyclus. Sir, May not God's Ways be very Just, and yet seem Unjust to Men's erring Understanding?

Epenetus. Nothing can be truly Just, which Human Understanding, purged from Prejudice, corrupt Affections, and Passions, judgeth to be Unjust; because God hath, by the Light of Nature, made Man capable of discerning between Right and Wrong, Good and Evil, Just and Unjust. When a Thing is done, Reason, with those general Impressions flowing from it, is able to say, this is Just, or this is Unjust, whether it be done by God, or Man: For Justice in God and Men are for Substance but one and the same Thing, tho' infinitely differing in Degree; Men's Virtues being but the Image of those Perfections that dwell most eminently in God. Now Reason was given us, that we might make a Distinction between Right and Wrong, Good and Evil: And accordingly, God hath demanded in Scripture a right Application of our Reason, calling upon us to be Judges of the Equity of his Ways: Which he never would have done, had not Reason been able to have given a determinate Vote: *Isa. 5. 3. Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my Vineyard. Ezek. 18. 25. O House of Israel, is not my Way equal? Are not your Ways unequal?*

Eutyclus. But whatsoever is set down in Scripture for the Will of God, must needs be Just, and consequently, this of his Absolute Decree in respect

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to the Elect and Reprobate; God's Will being the Rule of all Righteousness: Besides, God doth hereby fully manifest his *Justice*, and his *Mercy* too, his Justice toward Reprobates, his Mercy toward the Elect. And therefore it is necessary, the Decrees of God should be so order'd, in respect to them both, as that his Justice and Mercy may be set forth to the Sons of Men.

Epenetus. I deny, that those Absolute Decrees of Mens inevitable Damnation, are any part of God's Revealed Will; for the Scriptures teach no such Matter. For as One well observes, "God cannot will any Thing that is Unjust." Now Absolute Reprobation can be no Part of God's Revealed Will; because I have already proved it an unjust Thing, and odious to right Reason, begetting many Absurdities: For tho' the Scripture requires us to believe Things above Reason; yet it no-where requires us to believe Things contrary to Reason. It is said, *Rom. 12. 1.* That the Worship which God requireth, is a *reasonable Service*: Now, if this *Worship* and this *Service* are possible to the Elect only; the Reprobates being shut out by an Absolute Decree, either from *worshipping him in Spirit and in Truth*, or from performing any Obedience to his Commands; how reasonable this is, let any Man judge! What Man in the World can divest himself so far of Nature and Humanity, as to resolve with himself to marry, in order to have Children, that so after they are born, and have liv'd a-while with him, he may hang them up by their Tongues, tear their Flesh with Scourges, pull it from their Bones with burning Pincers, or put them to any cruel Tortures; that by thus Torturing them, he may shew his Power and Authority over them? Much less, can we believe, without great Violence to Reason, that *the God of Mercy* can so far forget himself, as out of his

Absolute Pleasure, to ordain such infinite Multitudes of his Children, made after his own Image, to Everlasting Fire; and create them one after another, that after the End of a short Life here, he may torment them without End hereafter, to shew his Power and Sovereignty over them. Who can believe, that the Righteous Judge of all the World, should first will, that a harmless Person should be made miserable, and then to will, that he be made a Sinner, that so he may be miserable? and this by way of Justice, and in order to manifest the Legality of his Proceedings with the Sons of Men? For my part, I should think more favourably of those Men, whom I should hear deny the Being of a God, than of those Men, who should say, that God delighteth in the Destruction of his Creatures; that he is a Devourer of the Souls of Men; that the Damnation of so many Millions of Souls, were Absolutely and Antecedently intended by Almighty God, long before they were born. What can we think of those Men, who have told the World, "That Grace is not offered by God, ev'n
 " to those who are called, with a Meaning to
 " give it, but to the Elect only? That tho' God
 " in Words protest he would have Reprobates be-
 " lieve; yet in Deed he will not have them?" Now what is this, but God's placing Men under the plentiful Means of Salvation, offering it to them so plainly, that Men would think that they might have it when they would; when, at the same time, he fully intendeth that they shall never have it; with-holding from them either the first Grace, that they cannot believe, or the second Grace, that they cannot persevere. Far be it from us to entertain such unworthy Notions of God and his Attributes. God cannot cease to be Omniscient, no, not for a Moment; his Foresight of All, is as necessary to him as his Perfection, and that

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as his Being: It was therefore impossible, (as implying a Contradiction,) that he should decree to Reject or to Reprobate his Creatures, without the least Intuition or Foresight of their Sins; and at the same Instant decree to Damn them, not without, but with a regard to their Sins.

Eutyclus. I do believe, that the Reason why God doth not decree to damn any Man without Respect to his Sins, is, because he could not otherwise have shewn his Justice.

Epenetus. And I believe the same Reason holds for the one, as well as the other: For if he would not decree to damn any without Respect unto their Sins, because he would be Just; he would as little decree to reprobate any Irrespectively, because he would be Just too. It being always his Intention to glorify his Justice in whatsoever he decreed; and how that can be done, by decreeing that Men should sin, in order to Punishment, I can't conceive. Sir, let me ask you one Question, Whether you think really, that God's Decree of Damnation was made without the least Respect to Sin in his Creatures?

Eutyclus. Tho' Punishment is executed after Sin, yet Sin was not intended to be the Cause of Damnation. And I have been told, that Mr. Perkins has taught for Divinity, *That God's Decree of Damning, was before his Decree of Creating Man.* So that tho' Eternal Punishment is last in Execution after Sin, yet it was first in God's Intention, ev'n before Sin.

Epenetus. Compare this with your last Objection, and you will find you contradict your self. Beside, if this Maxim were always true, [what is first intended, is last executed,] then a thousand Absurdities would follow. For what Man will say, that the Creation of the World, which was the first Thing in Execution, was the last in God's

Intention? But to put the Matter ev'n beyond Dispute: God foreseeing that Man would Voluntarily sin, if not forcibly hindred, and decreeing not to use any forcible Hindrance, (which would not suit with the Nature of a Free and Voluntary Agent,) he also saw that *Adam* would make a wrong Choice, and thereby fall from his State of Innocence. The State of *Adam* is to be looked on as a Disease, which stands in need of a sovereign Remedy. Now the Death of Christ is that Remedy which God decreed. Therefore it cannot be imagined, that the Remedy should be first in Intention before the Disease was foreseen, or the very Permission of it decreed; tho' still, the Remedy is to be last in Execution, as it was also in the Intention. Therefore, this Axiom must be so limited, as to be applicable to those Things only, whereby the latter is the Absolute End, and the former decreed as a Means to attain it by. But the Permission of Sin, is not designed by God as a Means of bringing in any former Decree of giving Christ; but as that which is suitable to *Adam's* Nature, created with a Free Elective Faculty, namely, what we call the Will. Now God foreseeing that Man will do what will be permitted to be done, doth also foresee an Opportunity of magnifying his Mercy in giving Christ, and accordingly decrees to give him; and that before *Adam* falls, tho' not before he decrees to permit his Fall, and actually foresees that Fall of *Adam*. In order therefore to detect this Maxim, [what is first intended, is last executed,] the following Comparisons will sufficiently shew the Absurdity of it. Suppose a Man determines to take a Servant into his House, who, instead of proving Honest and Faithful, his Master finds him a Knave, and so resolves to put him away; must he therefore put him away before he takes him, because

his

his Intention to take him, was before his Intention to put him away? Again, Suppose a Man here in *England* finding his Life to be in Danger, intends to go out of the Kingdom for the preserving himself from present Peril, not caring whether he goes; the first Thing that he intends, is to take Ship at *Dover*, then it being indifferent to him, whether he goes to *Flanders* or *Holland*, or any Place else, he at last determines to go to *Spain*: Now, this being last in his Intention, according to your Logic, must be first in Execution; that is, he must first sail to *Spain*, and after that, come and take Ship at *Dover*. In like Manner, if a Man intending to build a House, (not to let into Tenements, but to dwell in it himself,) and after that, designs to make it sumptuous, in the Prosecution of which, he turns Bankrupt, he then determines to let it out; therefore this being last in Execution, the specious furnishing of it next to that, and the building of it before both; it must follow by your Axiom, that he lets it out before he furnishes it, and that he furnishes it before he builds. Now, from what has been said, can any thing be more impossible?

Eutychus. Since I have received so much Satisfaction in this Point, let me further ask you, Whether Faith, Perseverance, and Salvation consequent thereupon, are not God's own? if so, whether God may not do what he will with his own; and so might not from all Eternity, absolutely purpose in himself, on whom to bestow them, from whom to withhold them, without any Injury to any?

Epenetus. I do not think what you have objected relates to the Matter in hand; for I never deny'd that Faith and Perseverance were God's own Free Graces. I grant they are not, cannot be ours, unless he gives them; but when he hath so gi-

ven them, he calls them ours. But the Question in Debate is, whether God decreed Eternal Torments upon his Creatures, without the Consideration of their Transgressions on whom these Torments are supposed to be decreed: Which I can by no Means grant; because, when Christ is given for all the fallen Sons of *Adam*, (as I have elsewhere proved,) it is impossible that God should frustrate and make void the End of Christ's Death, by punishing any Eternally, under the second Covenant of Grace, meerly for the Sin of *Adam*, without incurring that Punishment either by a Rejection of Christ, or by actually sinning some other way. God doth disclaim that wicked Proverb, *Ezek. 18. 2. The Fathers have eaten four Grapes, and the Childrens Teeth are set on edge.* Now, he that is kind to the Unthankful, and to the Evil, *Luke 6. 35.* and commandeth us to be merciful, as he is merciful, *ver. 36.* by loving our Enemies, as he did his, was more likely to shew Mercy to all that were in *Massá*, (because he is kind to his Creatures, and delighteth to forgive, who in the midst of Judgment, remembereth Mercy, *Jam. 2. 13.*) than to leave them in *Adam's* Loins, under a desperate Impossibility of being Saved, or of having any Interest in the Saviour of the World; and all because he is no Man's Debtor. The Psalmist saith plainly, That the tender Mercy of God is over all his Works, *Psal. 145. 9.* He doth not say Justice, but Mercy; which plainly intimateth something more to us, than a bare abstaining from Wrong: Nor doth he say, God's Mercy is over some of his Works, but over all, without Exception. Which, how could *David* affirm with Truth, if the far greatest part of Mankind (the noblest of all his Works under the Canopy of Heaven,) had been decreed to infinite and endless Torments, without the least Respect

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Respect or Consideration of any the least Sin committed actually by any one of them? If we should allow it to be Justice, to damn a poor Infant of a Day old to all Eternity, meerly as descending from a sinful *Adam*; yet, I pray you, where were the Mercy to that poor Infant? So that you must either contradict *David*, by denying that God's Mercy is over all his Works; or else allow, that it is a greater Mercy to that poor Infant, to allow him the Dignity of a Being, or an Immortality in Hell, *where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of Teeth; where the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched*; than to annihilate him, or reduce him to his Primitive Nothing. And as to *God's doing what he will with his own*, I grant he may do so; he may give Irresistible Grace, or Grace not Irresistible, yea, it may be Infallible and Converting Grace, and that whensoever he doth so, no Man hath reason to complain of his Superlative Mercy: Yet it must also be granted, that God *may* also, if he pleases, proceed no further with his Creatures, than to give them sufficient Grace, *to every Man a Talent to trade with*, and to him more Talents, who useth that Talent which he hath, as he ought. And from him who useth it not, or casts it away, or refuseth to receive it, or most unprofitably *lays it up in a Napkin*, God may justly take away his Talent of Grace which he hath given, or withhold what he had offer'd, and was refused. Thus far I believe, God may most justly do: But that God will interpose his Power and Work infallibly and irresistibly in the Conversion of a Sinner, is a Doctrine unsafe to proclaim, and most unchristian to teach Men to depend upon. For we are not to rest upon what God *may* do, but what he certainly *does and will do*. There are indeed several Courses and OEconomies all possible

fible to God; but our Saviour hath taught us, which of all those Courses God is pleased to chuse, in his Proceedings and Dealings with us. God *may* give us the Ability to fast as many Days and Nights as *Moses* and *Elias* did: He *may* also, if he pleases, make our Food to encrease in the very eating, by such a Power as he shewed in the Widow's *Cruse of Oil, and Barrel of Meal*; 1 Kings 17. 14, 16. He may feed us, and cloath us as he does the Birds and the Lilies; and by the same Omnipotency, by which he said, *Let there be Light, and there was Light*, he may convert us as he did *St. Paul*, with equal Power and Expedition; or, like the Thief upon the Cross, when we have only time left to cry *Peccavi*, or *Lord have Mercy upon us*; (tho' that either of these two were Irresistibly Converted, you wou'd find it hard to prove.) I say, he *may* do all this, yet we cannot prove from hence, that these are the Methods which God *doth* ordinarily use, or that he useth them once in a thousand Years; or indeed, that he will ever use them at all. God *might* have made us all as he did *Adam*, out of the Earth, without the Methods of Generation and Birth; but it does not follow from hence, that he *did*.

Eutychus. But the Apostle hath told us, *Rom. 11. 33. That God's Judgments are unsearchable, and his Ways past finding out*: Which is enough to stop the Mouths of his Creatures, and make them stand amazed, and adore his Counsels, which are past finding out by the shallow Line of Human Reason. Hath not God the same Power to do with his Creatures, as the Potter hath with his Clay, of the same common and equal Lump, to chuse one part unto *Honour*, and leave another unto *Dishonour*; the one having nothing to boast of, because the Grace that saves them, is Gods; the

the other nothing to complain of, because the Sin which ruins them is their own? For whatsoever God doth, he doth by the Counsel of his own Will; he did therefore, from Eternity, decree to permit Sin, in order to his own Glory, magnifying his Free Mercy in those in whom he did permit it, and pardon it; and in others, shewing forth due and deserved Justice. For otherwise, he could, by Confirming Grace, have hindred and prevented the committing Sin, ev'n in all, as well in *Adam*, as in his Posterity, as well in all Angels, as in some, and that without any Violence offered to their Nature at all, *Gen.* 31. 7. *1 Cor.* 10. 13.

Epenetus. As to what you have said, concerning God's Counsel being secret and unfathomable, it doth no way relate either to the Electing particular Persons Absolutely, or Conditionally; but to the Depth of God's Goodness, in patiently bearing with the Contumacy both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*; to the Depth of his Wisdom, in making the Fall of the *Jews*, a Means of bringing in the *Gentiles*. For had you not grossly overlook'd the Words immediately going before [*God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all;*] you might have seen, that it was the Consideration of that rich Mercy, which made the Apostle cry out, *Oh, the Depth, &c.* Quite different to your Principles; *St. Paul*, alledging that God may have Mercy upon All, you endeavouring to prove, that God may not have Mercy upon All. Beside, if those Words in the Apostle do belong to your Purpose for which you bring them, why do you search into those very Mystries which the Apostle confesseth to be *unsearchable*? For if they are unsearchable to me, they are also unsearchable to you; and if revealed in Scripture, I hope you have not the Vanity to think they are revealed
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to you only. Now, if the Scripture may be called *the revealed Will of God*, yea, *the good and perfect Will of God*, and if you will grant that God means as he speaks; then he hath clearly reveal'd in his Word, that he will never deal merely by the Rules of *Sovereignty and Power*, but of *Righteousness and Justice*, such as Man himself is permitted to judge of, and is appeal'd to by God himself, whether it be so or no. See *Isaiah* 5. 3, 4. *Jer.* 2. 5, 9, 10, &c. *Isaiah* 43. 26. *Micah* 6. 1, 2, 3. *Ezek.* 18. 23, 29, 30. *Gen.* 18. 23, 25. And as to God's passing by those *In Massa*, or the Loins of *Adam*, God hath plainly told us, *the Son shall not die for the iniquity of the Father*, *Ezek.* 18. And that with the precious Blood of Christ, he hath *bought* every one who was lost in *Adam*. See *2 Pet.* 2. 1. *2 Cor.* 5. 14. And as touching God's Decreeing to permit Sin from all Eternity, from his Actually permitting it in time, so far I will go hand in hand with you; because here you argue from the Execution to the Decree, when you say, [God doth permit Sin, and whatsoever he doth, he doth by the Counsel of his own Will, therefore he did from Eternity Decree to permit it.] Now, if this way of arguing is sound and rational, as it certainly is, and may be demonstrated to be; then we shall cease to be Antagonists any longer; which I hope to evince, by the following Chain of Propositions, whereof the one will be firmly link'd within the other. For Example: 1st, What God hath *willed shall come to pass*, shall come to pass as he hath will'd it, and no otherwise than as he hath will'd it, (for his Will of the Circumstance is as truly his, as his Will of the Substance.) From whence it follows, that 2^{dly}, What doth come to pass *Absolutely* (as the Creation of the World, the Mutability of Man, the tending of heavy Bodies downwards,

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wards, and the like) he did Eternally will should come to pass *Absolutely*; and what doth come to pass *Conditionally*, he did Eternally will should *Conditionally* come to pass. But the Word of God tells us, and all Men confess, that Man's Eternal Reward, or Punishment, doth come to pass upon Condition of his Obedience, or by reason of his Disobedience or Rebellion. Therefore, *4thly*, Man's Eternal Reward or Punishment, were Eternally decreed or will'd to come to pass, in the very same manner in which they do come to pass, namely, on Condition or in Respect of his Obedience, or Rebellion. Which Propositions must needs be true, because God's Decrees are adequate to their Events; and the Effects of his Decrees are exactly answerable to his Decrees, (as Face answereth Face, when a Man looketh into a Glass;) for whatsoever and howsoever he decreed to do before Time, that Thing, and in that Manner he doth in Time. Again, whatsoever and howsoever he doth in Time, that Thing and in that Manner he decreed to do before Time. But God in Time, doth cast Men into Hell, in regard of all their Sins, as well Actual as Original: Therefore he did Decree before Time, to cast Men into Hell, in regard of all their Sins, as well Actual as Original. The major is granted by you, and confirmed from *Eph. 1. 11*. The minor is granted by all sides, and is confirmed from every page of Scripture, as *Rom. 2. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11*. The Conclusion is granted in the Premises.

Eutychus. Since the Matter is thus, what must we think of those Places in Scripture, where it is said, *that God hardens Mens Hearts; that he delivers them up to a Reprobate Mind; that he sends them strong Delusions, that they should believe a Lie*, and the like? I'm sure this favours of an Efficacious Impulse in Almighty God on the Hearts of Men.

Epene-

Epenetus. By no Means; for God never hardens any Man's Heart as the Sun hardens Clay, by shining on it, but as the Sun hardens Wax by not shining on it, by not softening it any longer, and so by leaving it to harden itself. For all those Verbs, *to harden, to deliver up, to deceive, to send Delusions*, and the like, have been always taken *Figuratively*; *Permissive* in Signification, tho' *Active* in Sound. And in this Sense, I am informed, all the Fathers both of the Eastern and Western Churches have understood them. It being usual in the Style of the Scripture, to speak after this Manner: He who doth not restrain when he can, is said to give up: He who doth not take away when he can, is said to give: And he who doth not give, is said in that Case to take away. God is said to raise out of the Grave, when he only hinders from going thither; and to lead a Man thither, when he only suffers him to fall, or does not hinder him from falling. You know, in the Case of *Job*, *Job* 1. 11. and *chap.* 2. 5. that Satan intreated God, in the Imperative Mood, *Put forth thy Hand now, and touch all that he hath.* Who cannot, for all this, be thought to have *commanded* God Almighty, because God cannot be thought to have *obeyed* him; God only said, *Behold, he is in thine Hand*; from whence it is plain, he spake of a Permission only; where, by the way, it is observable, (and I pray God it may be usefully observed by them who take delight to do Mischief) That tho' God should grant our Petition, when we beg of him the Power of doing Evil, (as the Devil did,) yet when he shall grant our Petition, as he did Satan's, by permitting us to do, or not hindring us from doing all the Evil which we desire; it is by no Means an Argument of his Kindness and Approbation, but only an Argument of his Wrath, as it was to Sa-

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tan, *Job* 1. 11, 12. *Mat.* 8. 31, 32. Hear what an excellent Bishop of our own Church has said on this Matter, who was frightened out of your Principle, by those Horrible Conclusions which some Men drew (and which, by you, must follow) from those Words of our Saviour, in the Imperative Mood, *Destroy this Temple*, (meaning the *Temple of his Body*;) that Holy Man hath these Words: (a) "That it
" should enter into any Man's Heart to think, that
" Christ would open his Mouth to command or
" counsel his own Making-away, (that is, the
" committing the most horrible foul Murder that
" ever was;) God forbid! Give me any Religion,
" rather than that, that draweth God into the
" Society of Sin; makes him, and makes Christ,
" either Author or Adviser, Commander or Coun-
" seller of ought that is Evil: Any, I say, rather
" than that. — This *Solvire* was to them, as *Fac*
" *citò* to *Judas* after; *Quod facis*, That which thou
" art resolved to do, and hast taken Earnest upon
" it; *Fac*, Do it; *Fac citò*, Do it out of the way;
" which, yet (it is well known) was nothing
" but a Permission, and not a Jot more. But
" should so foul an Evil as that be permitted
" though? No, nor that neither, simply; it is not
" a bare Permission, but one qualified, and that
" with two Limitations: Will ye mark them? For,
" first, he would not suffer any Evil at all, (least
" of all that) but that out of the Evil he was able
" (able and willing both) to draw a far greater
" Good: Greater for Good, I say, than that was
" for Evil." For God, every-where in Scripture,
professeth, that he *wills not Evil*; as when he
forbids it by his Laws, *Exod.* 20. *Rom.* 6. 12.

(a) Bishop Andrews's Sermon X. of the *Resurrection*, upon *John* 2. 19. pag. 486, 487.

When he provides against it by his Discipline, *1 Tim.* 1. 20. When he shews us how to avoid it, *Deut.* 11. 18, 26. When he tells us, he cannot endure it, *Psal.* 5. 4, 5. and 45. 7. *Isa.* 61. 8. When he wins us from it by Promises, *Deut.* 5. 29. When he frights us from it by Threats, *Rom.* 1. 18. *Gen.* 2. 17. When he professeth, that it is to him both a Trouble and a Dishonour, *Isa.* 7. 13. How doth he wish, that his People had walked in his Ways? *Psal.* 81. 13. How doth he exhort and make his Appeal, whether he had omitted any thing which might tend to the Conversion of a sinful *Israel*? *Isa.* 5. 3, 4. Is not the whole 18th Chapter of *Ezekiel* spent in taking away that unworthy Proverb, *The Fathers have eaten sour Grapes, and the Childrens Teeth are set on edge. Are not my Ways equal?* (saith God,) *And are not your Ways unequal?* But sure, *their Ways* had been *his*, if he had Absolutely contrived them. *The Soul that sinneth, it shall die*, ver. 4. And *why will ye die, O House of Israel?* ver. 31. Which was virtually to ask them, Why they would Sin too? Which it is plain, they ought to have done, if he had willed it: For the positive Will of God must and ought to be done, (as we pray in our Daily Prayer which God hath taught us:) And can any Man be punished for doing what he must do? Must any Man be punished for doing that which he ought to do? No, so far is God from being the Author of any Man's Sin, that the Apostle, *1 Cor.* 10. 13. saith, *He is faithful, and will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able,* but will be sure to *make a way*, either for Conquest, or for Escape. We dare not say then, when we have been great Sinners, *What if God hath so decreed it?* St. James hath told me, that Sin is both ingendred and conceived within me: *when my Lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth Sin*, *Jam.* 1. 15. And

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And if my Lust is the Mother of it, sure the Father is my Will. It was *David's* Remark on wicked *Israel*, that *they provoked God to Anger*, (not with his Will, but) *with their own Inventions*, *Psal.* 106. 29. There are Contrivers of *Mischief*, *Psal* 58. 3. Devisers of *Lies*, such as *weary themselves to commit Iniquity*, *Jer.* 9. 5. And shall we presume to impute all these to an Absolute Decree? God forbid! O Lord, *righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face. For thou hast made Man upright; but we have found out many inventions*, *Dan.* 9. 7. *Eccles.* 7. 29. We are thy Creatures O Lord, but Sin is of our own Creating, Thou sawest every thing that thou hadst made, and behold it was very good. We see the Things that are made by the Fiat of our Will, and behold they are very Evil; for *the Wages of Sin is Death*. Which plainly shews, that God did not ordain Punishment, but in respect to Sin. Because if God had made a Hell by an Absolute Purpose, meerly because he would that some should suffer it, Damnation had been a Misery, but not a Punishment: Which would represent God to be just like One I have read of, who made it his Recreation, to cut up Animals alive. For what Potter makes a Vessel on purpose that he may break it? Sure none but a Madman can be thought to act thus. God hath said, *Rom.* 12. 19. *Vengeance is mine, and I will repay*. But how could this be, if God cast Men into Hell, without regard to any one Sin committed by them? (as you have formerly said.) This wou'd be an Act of Power, indeed, but not of Vengeance: Hell wou'd be a Torment, but not a Recompence. From whence we may learn, The Sinner is the Efficient Cause of his Eternal Punishment; tho' not of Hell, the Place of his Punishment; neither of the Devils, or the Fire, the Instruments of his Punishment: For they are Sub-

stances of God's creating, and in their Nature very good: Hell being made by God to keep Men from it, as well as to punish those that would needs go to it. It is not the *Witness*, the *Judge*, or the *Fury*; it is not the *Jaylor*, the *Sheriff*, or the *Gibbet*; it is not the *Carpenter* who made the *Gibbet* on which the *Felon* is to be hang'd, neither the *Hangman* by whom, nor the *Halter* with which the *Felon* is hang'd; it is not, I say, any, nor all of these, to which the Death of the *Malefactor* can be so much imputable; as to *himself*. He is therefore the most Effectual Cause, who by the *Heinousness* of his Felony did call Death to him, and pulled Destruction upon himself with the work of his own hands, (as the Book of Wisdom speaks, chap. 1. 12, 16.) For to say, that God is a Slayer of Men from all Eternity, who is the *Lamb slain* (that is, a *Saviour*) from the foundation of the World, Rev. 13. 8. is to affirm that of Him, which He affirmed of the Devil, who is called by our Saviour, a *Murderer from the Beginning*, John 8. 44. Which the Devil cou'd not be, if God had absolutely will'd the Death of any, without respect or relation to the Snares of the Devil; it being impossible to murder the Dead, or to slay those that were kill'd long before they were born.

Eutychus. Sir, I have been told, That if Sin were the Cause that moved God to Reprobate Mankind, he would have Reprobated or Rejected All, because all Men are look'd upon as Sinners: But since he did not Reprobate All, therefore for Sin he Reprobated None, but for his own Pleasure; in which we must rest, without seeking any other Cause.

Epenetus. Sir, the Evening begins to come on; therefore, with your Leave, I will consider this Objection at our next Meeting; and so I commend you

you to the Divine Protection, and heartily wish you a Good-Night.

Eutychus. Shall I trespass so far on your Good Nature, as to favour me with your Company again to Morrow, for I am very desirous to know your Opinion in this last Particular.

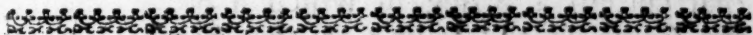
Epenetus. Any thing that I can serve you in, you may freely command.

Eutychus. Sir, I humbly thank you, and most kindly wish you also a Good-Night.

The End of the Fifth Conference.



CONFERENCE VI.



Epenetus.

Good Morrow to you, Sir.

Eutychus. Be pleased to walk in, my very good Friend: I thought every Minute long, 'till I saw you. I am extreamly affected with your last Discourse, and it is an inexpressible Joy to me, to hear God so fully cleared from having any the least hand in the Misery of his Creatures; and that he has no hand in the *Effecting* any Evil, or ev'n in the Permission of it, so far as Permission denotes Connivance. All this is a mighty Encouragement to me, to go on with my *Objections*, in hopes to find the same Satisfaction. I shall therefore repeat over again my last Objection, which was this; If Sin were

he Cause that moved God to Reprobate Mankind, he would have reprobated or rejected *All*, because *all men are look'd upon as Sinners*. But since he did not Reprobate *All*, therefore for *Sin* he reprobated *none*, but for his own *pleasure*; in which we must rest, without seeking any other Cause.

Epenetus. Then it must follow from hence, that God did bring Men into a *Necessity* of Sinning, and left them under this *Necessity*; and so, consequently, must be the *Author* of the Reprobate's Sins. For by this Doctrine, God must be the chief and sole Cause of that, which is the Necessary and Immediate Cause of the Sins of Reprobates, namely, their Impotency and want of Supernatural Grace; therefore he is by the same Doctrine, the true and proper Cause of their Sins. Because that which withdraweth or withholdeth a thing, which being present would hinder an Event, is the Cause of that Event. As for Example: He that cutteth a String in which a Stone hangs, is the Cause of the falling of that Stone; and he that withdraweth a Pillar, which being put to, would uphold a House, is the true Cause, in Mens account, of the falling of that House: Now, if God withholdeth from Reprobates that *Power*, which being granted them, would keep them from falling into Sin; by Consequence he becometh a *true moral Cause* of their Sins.

Eutychus. Here you are under a Mistake. God's withholding Grace from the Reprobates, may indeed be said to be an *Accidental*, but not a Proper and Direct Cause of their Sins.

Epenetus. If I am under a Mistake, you are quite beside the Purpose: For a Cause is then only *Accidental* in relation to the Effect, when the Effect is beside the Intention and Expectation of the Cause. For Example: Digging in a Field, is then an *Accidental Cause* of finding a Bag of Gold,

Gold, when the Event is neither expected, nor intended by the Husbandman, in digging : But when the Effect is look'd for, and aim'd at, then the Cause (tho' it be the Cause only of withholding the Impediment) is not Accidental. For Instance : A Pilot withholding his Care and Skill from a Ship in a Storm, when at the same time he sees, by his Neglect, the Ship will be lost ; is not to be reputed an *Accidental*, but a *Proper* and *True Cause* of the Loss of the Ship. From whence I argue, That God, by his Act and Decree of removing and denying Grace necessary to the avoiding Sin, from the Reprobates, (not as one ignorant and careless what will or shall follow, but knowing infallibly what Mischief will follow, and determining precisely that which doth follow, namely, their Impenitency and Damnation,) becometh the Proper and Direct Cause of their Sins. This is and will be always the Consequence of your Doctrine, a *Doctrine* most cruel and destructive to the Souls of Men, and repugnant to the Scriptures in every Page of them. *How oft would I have gathered you ?* saith Christ to Jerusalem, Mat. 23. 37. *These things I say, that ye might be saved : but ye will not come to me, that ye might have life,* John 5. 34, 40. intimating in those words no less than this, That it was his full Intent, by his Preaching, to gather and to save those very particular Men, that in the end were not gathered nor saved, through their Contempt and Neglect of Christ's Ministry : *If I had not come, and spoken unto them, they had not had sin,* saith our Saviour, John 15. 22. From whence it is evident, That Christ, in his Preaching, did administer so much inward Grace, as was sufficient to convince those who rejected the Gospel, of positive Unbelief, and render them obnoxious to just Punishment. God's principal Aim in the Husbandry he bestowed on the *Jewish Church*,

was, that it should *bring forth good Fruit* ; tho' in the Event it did not. For when God *looked for Grapes*, saith the Text, *Isa. 5. 2. it brought forth wild Grapes.* And tho' the *Fig-tree be barren* under the Gospel Dispensation, yet he is not willing to *cut it down* immediately, till he hath *digged about it, and dunged it.* God's Intent in bearing with Mens Sins, is, the *leading them to Repentance* ; and so on to Salvation. For *Repentance* is ordained by Him to *Salvation*, as a *Means* to the *End* ; God intending Good by his Forbearance, ev'n to such as despise the Goodness of his Forbearance ; not *knowing* or considering *that the Goodness of God should lead them to Repentance.* For St. Peter saith, *2 Pet. 3. 9. The Lord is not slack, — as some men count slackness, — but is long-suffering to us-ward ;* that is, us Men. And why is he patient towards us ? but only because he is *not willing that any should perish* ; but the End of his Patience, is, *that All should come to Repentance.* He is willing that we should escape that terrible Sentence, *Mat. 25. 41. Depart from me, ye Cursed, into Everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* And therefore hath left it upon Record ; to the Intent that we might so frame our Lives and Conversations, as not to come under it. And here I must remark, That tho' our Blessed Saviour bid them on the Left-hand *depart into everlasting fire* ; yet he did not say it was prepared for *them* but for *the Devil and his Angels.* For if *the Wages of Sin be Death and Hell*, *Rom. 6. 23.* surely the Paying of the *Wages*, implies the Doing of the *Work.* From whence I infer, That God did not prepare Hell for *Men* as Men, no, nor for *Angels* as Angels ; but, that God in his primary Design, made Hell for *wicked Angels*, and *wicked Men*, inasmuch as they were wicked ; and so had prepared themselves for Hell, (in order of

of Nature) before that God had prepared Hell for them. For, in Order of Nature, Sin is first, and Punishment afterward; God never determining that *Cain* and *Judas* should be cast out of his Presence, but for their Murder and Impenitency, and no otherwise. From whence I infer, That the least degree of God's Mercy, hath some Comfort: But is it a Comfort to the Reprobates, that they were render'd Incapable of Heaven, by a Peremptory Decree, and sure of Hell, without respect unto their Sins? yea, and lying under an Absolute Necessity of being Sinful, without a Possibility of Repentance, that so they might not be Damn'd for nothing? How contrary are these Positions, to that God, who hath told us, *He hath no Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked. He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men. He is a God ready to Pardon, swift to shew Mercy, and slow to Wrath. His Mercy is over all his Works. His Commandments are not grievous. The Soul that sinneth, it shall die. The Son shall not die for the Iniquity of the Father.* For God requireth according to what Men have, and not according to what they have not. He condemns not any Man for not Seeing, to whom he never gave Eyes, or who never had Light whereby to See. He condemns not the Deaf, for not Hearing the Gospel; nor the tender Infant, for not Comprehending it: And how he will be pleased to deal with Others, who are under such-like Impossibility, for want of having the Gospel preached unto them, he hath no otherwise told us, than by Parity of Reason, That many are saved by Christ's Name, who never heard it; and by his Merits, who never heard of them.

Eutychus. But there are some Texts of Scripture that seem to say the contrary, namely, *Rom. 1. 20.* where God is said to reveal himself to the Gentiles, by the Creatures, that they might be
without

without excuse. And Luke 2. 34. Simeon saith of Christ, that he is appointed *for the fall, and rising again of many in Israel.* And 1 Cor. 1 23. *But we preach Christ saith, St. Paul, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness, &c.* By these places it seemeth, that God giveth these things to some, to make them *stumble*, and that they might be left *without excuse.*

Epenetus. In answer to this, I do believe, That it is with God's Ordinances and Gifts, (and that very often too) as it is sometimes with Physic; which is given by the *Physician* for the Patient's good; but many times, thro' the Distemper of his Body, it doth him hurt. And as it is with the *Sun*, God intendeth by the Shining of it, the Enlightning and Cherishing of Men and other Creatures in this Lower World; but some Men are hurt by the Light of it, others are scorched by the Heat of it: not Intentionally, but Accidentally, and that by reason of the Climates wherein they live, or the Ill-affectedness of their Eyes and Bodies. God's Blessings being many times bestowed upon Men, for their Eternal Welfare, out of his abundant Goodness and Clemency, which yet, thro' the ill frame and temper of Mens Hearts, do effect their Hurt: For whatsoever Gifts and Graces we receive from God, if they are not improved according to the Intent of the Donor, will certainly turn to our greater Condemnation hereafter; and as one expresses it, "They that have despised God's "Inviting Will, shall feel his Revenging Will." Our Saviour having told us, *where much is given, much shall be required.* And *he that knew his Masters Will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many Stripes.* But Men of your Perswasion, have told the World, that God never intended the Means of Grace, for the Salvation of Reprobates, they being Absolutely Rejected, both from Grace and Salva-

Salvation too, by a peremptory Decree. Hear what Calvin saith, in his Book of *Institutions*, Book 3. Chap. 24. (which I find quoted by an excellent Divine of our own;) "God sendeth his Word to
 "Reprobates, that they may be made more deaf;
 "he setteth up a Light before them, to make
 "them the blinder; he giveth them a Remedy
 "that they might not be healed." To the same purpose speaks (a) *Beza*; "It should not seem
 "absurd unto us, (saith he) that God should offer
 "his Grace, in the Word and Sacraments, to some
 "Reprobates in the Church, not to this End,
 "that they might be saved by it, but that they
 "might be less excusable than others, and obnoxious to the sorer Punishment." If this be the Case, I can't see why any should be afraid of any Sin which is Pleasant or Profitable, seeing they must needs Sin by an Absolute Necessity; or what reason any have to *Weep* or *Mourn*, when they have Sinned; seeing they have not Sinned *truly*, because they Sinned *necessarily*. For if Men Sin by a Decree, that causeth them to Sin, it must either be the fault of that Decree, or no fault at all; and be it which way it will, it is not the fault of the Man; and by consequence Sorrow, Fear, or any other Act of Repentance, may be as well spared as spent. For if all our Doings are God's Ordinances, all our Imaginations Branches of his Predestination, and all Events in Kingdoms and Commonwealths the necessary Issue of the Divine Decree, then all Things that Ministers and States, Courts and Kingdoms do or act, comes just to nothing at all: The best Laws cannot restrain one Offender, nor the greatest Reward promote one Virtue; the most powerful Sermon can-

(a) *Beza Prælod. in cap. 9. ad Rom. pag. 434.*

not convert one Sinner, nor the humblest Devotions divert one Calamity. The strongest Endeavours (by this Opinion) in Things of any Nature whatsoever, can affect no more, than would be done without them; because the Necessitating Over-ruling Decree of God doth all. And if Laws do nothing, wherefore are they made? If Rules of Religion do nothing, why are they prescribed? If the Wills of Men do nothing, why are Men encouraged to one thing, and scared from another? If therefore good Endeavours and Designs do nothing, being controlled and every way governed by an Absolute Decree, to what Purpose are they used? So that this Doctrine tends to subvert Religion and Piety, Government and Society, out of the World.

Eutychus. I am pretty well satisfied with what you have said in this last Particular; but yet there is one Text of Scripture, namely, St. *Jude*, ver. 4. which seems to interfere with your Discourse: *There are certain Men* (saith he) *crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation:* implying, that notwithstanding all the Zeal and Vigilance of the Church to keep such out, yet they must come in, because the Apostle saith, *they were ordained to this Condemnation.* How are they said to be *Ordained* to it?

Epenetus. Not by an Absolute Reprobation: For Divines say, the Original Word implies no such thing. But such ungodly Men as are there mentioned, who *turn the Grace of God into lasciviousness, and deny the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ,* may be said to be *ordained to this condemnation* in a three-fold sense. 1st, By God's general Decree, or the Sentence of the Law, which is the Revelation of that Decree, *That the wicked shall die.* For God being Essentially Holy, cannot take *pleasure in wickedness*, Psal. 5. 4. nor will

will he *clear the guilty*, *Exod.* 34. 7. He hath therefore from all Eternity made a general Decree, to *render to every Man according to his Works*, *Rom.* 2. 6. *Heaven* is a Reward for such as continue to the End in Well-doing, but *Death* and *Hell* are the *Wages of Sinners*, and the *Workers of Iniquity*. Now by Reason of such an Eternal Law or Decree, immutably established in Heaven, every such wicked Wretch may be said to be *fore-ordained* to Condemnation. Not that this Decree being an Immanent Act in God, doth produce any real Effect, answerable to it self, either *for* the Creature, before he was made, or *in* the Creature after he was made, until he hath of himself, freely made up that measure of Sin, unto which *Hell-fire* was annexed by the said Decree. You know, we say, The Malefactor is a *Dead Man*, before either the *Judge* hath given Sentence, or the *Jury* brought in their Verdict; that is, he is *Dead in Law*; Dead by a Decree made concerning such Crimes many hundred Years (perhaps) before this Malefactor was Born. Now as the Laws of Men on Earth, do not Necessitate any Man to commit those Crimes, against which they are made, so neither doth the Eternal Decree of God in Heaven, which was promulged into a wholsom Law against Sin, necessitate or force any Man to commit those Crimes, against which it is established. The Law made and provided against Felony, is so far from necessitating any Man to commit it, that it serves every Man for a Preservative against it. Neither is any Man liable to the Condemnation of the Law, till he be found Guilty, and Convicted of the Voluntary Breach of it. And shall we think, that God Acts upon a principle of Justice below that of Man! Far be it from us to think so wickedly. *The Soul that sinneth it shall die*, and he that hath filled up the measure of his Iniquity, may,
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in respect of God's General Decree against Sin, be said to be *fore-ordained* to Condemnation; and in this sense it is, the Finally Unbelieving, are said by our Saviour, to be *condemned already*, John 3. 18, 36. 2dly, They may be said to be *ordained*, by way of *Prediction*, it being so fore-told or left upon public Record. And this is more agreeable to the Word in St. Jude, than that by which it is rendred [*Ordained*] for it seems the Original Word may signify any thing exposed to public View, being pasted on a Door to be taken notice of. agreeable to that Passage in Gal. 3. 1. where Christ is said to be *set forth* before the Eyes of the Galatians, being set forth and exposed to public View, in the Holy Ordinances of his Church. So were those Seducers St. Jude speaks of, and all such as follow their pernicious Ways, posted up, set forth to Condemnation, in those Predictions of our Saviour and his Apostles, to which St. Jude alludes, as appears, ver. 17. 18. *Remember ye the Words which were spoken before of the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, how that they told you, there should be Mockers, &c. Luke 21. 8, 21. 2. Thess. 2. 8, &c.* That St. Jude speaks of such a Prediction of them, appears by the 14 verse; *And Enoch also the seventh from Adam, (as Moses and others had done) prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh, &c.* In this respect also the Ungodly may be said to be *fore-ordained* unto condemnation. 3dly, They may be said to be *ordained* to Condemnation, by some notable Type or Example: Thus St. Jude saith, ver. 7. that the Sodomites were *set forth for an Example, suffering the Vengeance of Eternal Fire*. St. Peter saith, they were made *an Example unto those that after should live ungodly*, 2 Pet. 2. 6. For our Saviour's Rule is, that they that are parallel in the Sin, shall be also in the Judgment, Luke 13. 3. And accordingly the Apostle having declared

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declared that the *Israelites* had a Promise of Inheriting the Land of *Canaan*, yet by their repeated Provocations they were cut off by God's Oath, (see *Numb.* 14. 21, 22, 34, 35.) from all Hope or Possibility of Enjoying it. The Apostle, I say, gives us Christians Caution, to avoid the like Sins, lest we fall under the like irrecoverable Sentence of Reprobation, *Heb.* 3. 18. & *chap.* 4. 1, 11. and again he tells us, *1 Cor.* 10. 6, 11. the Judgments of God upon that People were our *Types, Figures,* or *Examples*, and that they were *written for our admonition*. If you remember, there is a Passage in *St. Jude*, *ver.* 11. where it is said, that the Covetous, Seditious, and Bloody Sect of the *Gnosticks* in his time, went in the way of *Cain*, and ran greedily after the Error of *Balaam* for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of *Core*. Now you know, this could be no otherwise than in their *Types, Patterns,* or *Representatives*; because the Rebellion of *Corah* was in *Moses's* time, and these Men lived in *St. Jude's* time, which was about 1500 Years after. Thus you may see in what sense Men may be said to be *fore-ordained to Condemnation*, though their Persons be under no such Decree of Absolute Reprobation.

Eutychus. But, Sir, if the Reprobates were not ordained to *Condemnation* by an Absolute Decree, how comes it to pass that our Saviour did not Pray for their Conversion? For in that most pathetic Prayer of his, recorded by the Evangelists, (nay, understood by some Men as a Copy of his Intercession now in Heaven,) he there prayeth only for the Elect: *John* 17. 9. *I pray for them: I pray not for the World, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine.*

Epenetus. This Text, tho' often brought by Men of your Principles, as a main Prop and Support to their Cause, yet it has nothing of Strength
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or Weight in it. For if we did but rightly observe the several and distinct *Parts* of our Saviour's Prayer, it would give us a right understanding of the *Whole*. For the first and greatest Part thereof, is spent in the behalf of his *Apostles*, for whom he prays, That his Father wou'd preserve them in Truth and Unity, *ver. 11. 17.* That he would give them Patience and Courage to endure and undergo the Malice of a wicked World, and to support their Souls under the Persecutions of it, *ver. 14, 15.* That he would Bless their Ministry, by making it Successful to the Conversion of the World. For our Saviour designing this Prayer, in an especial manner for his *Apostles*, whom he had now invested with the Office of the Ministry, he emphatically Prays for the Prosperity of their Office, and the Perseverance of their Persons in the Faith, in these Words, *I pray for them, I pray not for the World:* but having in particular prayed for them, he then Prays more extensively, even for *All that should believe, thro' their Ministry,* *ver. 20.* and because Unity in Faith, Charity and Affection in Doctrine, are so amiable, that they are a great Motive to enduce Strangers to embrace that Religion, which is calculated to preserve such Unity among the Professors of it; therefore he prays for this Unity amongst Believers, that it may gain Credit to the Gospel they profess, and procure the Ministry thereof to be the more effectual to the Unbelieving World, *ver. 21.* The whole Prayer, in respect to what has been said, runs thus, *Neither pray I for these [Apostles] alone, but for them also which shall believe on me, through their Word; that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us.* Observe in particular these Words following, *That the World,* (that is of Unbelievers) *may know that thou hast sent me.* From whence it is manifest, that our Saviour prayed,

prayed, that the grace of *Faith* might immediately thro' the Preaching of the Apostles, be bestowed on the whole World; and *he that believeth in Christ, hath Everlasting Life*. God so loved the World, (saith St. John, chap. 3. 16.) *that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, &c.* God loved the World, saith the Text, that is, the whole Race of Mankind; *He willeth not the death of a Sinner*. And lest some Men should say, It is true, he willeth not the Death of a Repenting Sinner, he hath told us, *Ezek. 18. 32.* he extendeth the Proposition to them also that perish; *I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth*. "God would fain have us believe Him, saith " *Tertullian*, (as quoted by an eminent Divine of " our own Church) when he saith, *I will not " the death of him that dieth*: and therefore he " bindeth his speech with an Oath. (a) Happy " are we, for whose sake the Lord vouchsafeth " to swear; but most unhappy if we believe him " not when he sweareth." But further, God, saith St Paul. *Rom. 11. 32. hath concluded all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all*. In which Words, there are two (*Alls*) of equal Extent, the one standing against the other; namely, an *All* of Unbelievers, and an *All* of Objects of Mercy; so that as many *Unbelievers* as there are, on so many hath God a Will of shewing Mercy: And therefore, if there be Unbelievers among Men of all Sorts and Conditions, and every Man in every Sort may be Unbelievers, then is every Man of every Condition under Mercy; and if every Man be under Mercy, then there is no precise antecedent Will of God, of shutting up some (and those the greatest part too) from all possibility of obtaining Mercy. Now, if God *hath no*

(a) *Tertul. lib. de Pæn. c. 4.* O beatos nos, quorum causa deus jurat! O miserimos, si nec juranti domino credimus!

pleasure in wicked Mens death, not ev'n of theirs who have *despised and rejected* his Offers of Grace, much less can he *take pleasure in the damnation* of so many Millions of Souls, who are either altogether Innocent, or tainted only with *Original Sin*. How contrary to all this, do Men of your Principle teach, who tell Mankind, " That all
 " Things (and by consequence all Sins) do happen,
 " not only by God's Fore-knowledge, but by his
 " positive Decree: That Men do Sin by God's
 " Impulse; and execute, as well as contrive all
 " Mischief, not by God's Permission only, but by
 " his Command too: That God makes Angels and
 " Men Transgressors: That God's Decree is no less
 " Efficacious in the Permission of Evil, than in
 " the Production of Good: That God made Man
 " on purpose that he might Sin, and that he might
 " have something to damn him for justly: That
 " God hath more hand in Men's Sinfulness than
 " they themselves: That God doth necessitate
 " Men to Sin; incite, seduce, compel, pull, draw,
 " and command Men to Sin; injects Deceivings,
 " and tempts Men to Sin. " These, with a number-
 less the like Blasphemous Expressions, are carefully
 collected by a worthy *Dollor* of our Church, who
 was once tainted with these Principles, but at last
 confessed, that their Horrible Conclusions frightened
 him into his Wits. " For (saith he) Is it not
 " a Blasphemy to speak against God? Is it not
 " the very blackest and most unsufferable Blasphe-
 " my to speak against the very Purity and Holiness
 " of God? Is not his Purity himself? and there-
 fore is it not worse to asperse his Purity, than
 " to deny his Being? and have not these Men
 " aspersed the Purity of God, with all the foulest
 " Affirmations that can be thought on? Let any
 " Man living set down and study with what
 " variety of Words and Phrases it is possible to
 " express

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“ exprefs the *Author* of Sin by, and I will publickly demonstrate, that all that variety of *Words* and *Phrases* hath been used, ev’n in *Print*, by Men of that Way, in direct Affirmations of God “ himself. ” These are Principles proceeding from Men who have confounded God’s Prescience with his Decree, who say, God must needs will Sin, because he did foresee it; not allowing that God could *otherwise foresee it*, than by *decreeing it should come to pass*: A Blasphemy which contradicts the Word of God, which saith, he *wills not the wickedness of a Sinner*, Psal. 5. 4. Again: It is a Blasphemy which contradicts the Oath of God, which *swears, he wills not the death of a Sinner*, Ezek. 33. 11. Further: It is Blasphemy in this Particular, by inferring, that the shallow Knowledge of Man, is more extensive than the Knowledge of God: for Man doth *know many things which he doth not will or determine*; whereas God (say Men of your Way) *never knew any thing in the World, but what he will’d and determin’d*; nay which is yet a greater Madness) *that he never knew, or could know any thing, but because he will’d and determin’d its future Being*.

Eutychus. Sir, tho’ we should allow that God’s foreknowledge be not Productive of Sin; yet, do not the Scriptures constantly hold forth God’s Manner of working Sin by way of *Action*? They do not say, God *suffered Joseph’s Brethren to sell him into Egypt*, but that God *sent him*, Gen. 45. 8. It is not said, that God *suffered Pharaoh to harden his own heart*, but, that God *harden’d it*, Exod. 9. 12.

Epenetus. How you make the Scriptures constantly to hold forth God’s working in Sin, I can’t see. Indeed, there are some Passages, which, taken literally, do seem to make God a Moral Cause of Sin as Sin. But all these Places are figuratively spoken; or else, the Scripture com-

mands us to continue in Sin: Rev. 22. 11. *Let him which is filthy, be filthy still.* Again: Can you think, that our Saviour was Accessory to that Murder, which the *Jews* committed upon his Person, because he bid them *destroy this Temple*, meaning the *Temple of his Body*? I am sure, to have commanded, it in the Sense you put upon such Places of Scripture, had been a kind of laying violent Hands upon himself. For tho' the Letter of the Text seem to sound that Way; yet what he said, was only by way of *Permission*, or bidding them *do* what he knew they *would do*, if not forcibly hindred, (as I have elsewhere observed.) As to the Instance of *Joseph*, it is most remarkably impertinent, and quite beside the Purpose: You say indeed, that God *sent Joseph* into *Egypt*; so doing, you say well: but had you said, that God *sold Joseph* into *Egypt*, (in which *Sale* of *Joseph*, his Brethren finned,) it would have been more to your Purpose, tho' quite contrary to the Meaning of that Place. However, you have betrayed your Inconsiderateness, in this Particular: For, I pray observe, *Joseph's* Speech runs thus, *God sent me before you, to preserve you a Posterity in the Earth, and to save your Lives by a great Deliverance: So now, it was not you that sent me hither, but God; and he hath made me a Father to Pharaoh, and Lord of all his House, &c.* Gen. 45. 7, 8. Now, I pray observe, he speaks of nothing but the *Good* which God had done for him, upon occasion of that *Evil* which they that sold him, had done against him. God is indeed, affirmed here by *Joseph*, to be the Author of much *Good*, which his Guilty Brethren never thought of; but not at all of the *Evil* which they thought against him. Well might *Joseph* tell his Brethren, *it was not they that sent him thither*; for they sent him no-where, but sold him to utter

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Strangers, purely for Money, and sweet Revenge, neither knowing, nor caring, nor yet considering what the Buyers would do with him: Nay, they had kill'd him outright, but that *Judah* put them in Mind, that there was no Profit in his Blood, but the Pleasure of Revenge only; whereas, if they sold him, there was Revenge and Profit too; from which it is plain, *they did not send him into Egypt*: But it was God that wrought such Compassion in the Hearts of them that bought him; who brought *Joseph* into *Egypt*, not only to that Place, but to that Height and Pitch of Dignity. What his Brethren did, was entirely *Evil*; but what God acted, was transcendently *Good*; Good and Wise to Admiration. Your Instance of *Pharaoh* is not so bad as the former, tho' ridiculous enough too: For tho', God is said to *harden Pharaoh's Heart, by doing somewhat*; yet it was not by *working in Sin*, but by sparing him, when he might have destroyed him; see *Rom. 9. 17.* and by removing those Punishments, and all other Means of his Recovery, which God had so long afforded to him, and all to no Purpose, and suffering him to live longer, and so harden his own Heart. For it is said, *Pharaoh's Heart was hardened*, *Exod. 7. 22.* which only implies the *Permission*, not the *Efficiency* of God: Nay, it is said, *Pharaoh harden'd his own Heart*, *Exod. 8. 15.* Again, after that, it is said, that *Pharaoh sinned yet more, and harden'd his Heart, he and his Servants*, *Exod. 9. 34.* (whom God is said to have *endured with much long-suffering*, *Rom. 9. 22.*) as it were on Purpose to deliver us from the very Possibility of erring grossly in this Point, when we should afterwards read, *God harden'd his Heart*. And how did God do it? sure, not in the Way either that *Pharaoh* or *Satan* did it; for *Satan* harden'd *Pharaoh's Heart*, as well as *Pharaoh* himself; both being

Active and Effective in its Obduration. But God's *hardening his Heart*, was by a Total and Final withdrawing his Grace, leaving him in a State of Irrecoverable Wickedness; by such a kind of forsaking, by which the Damned are left in Hell. Nay, even this very Dereliction and Leaving *Pharaoh* to himself, (the certain Consequence of which, was his Final Obduration,) was conferred on him as a Punishment for his having *hardened his Heart so often*, when God by his Messengers, and their Miracles and Wonders, had often call'd him to Repentance. See *Psal.* 95. 8.

Eutychus. But it is said, *Joshua* 11. 20. That *it was of the Lord to harden the Hearts of the Canaanites, that they should come against Israel in Battle that he might destroy them utterly.*

Epenetus. The *hardening of their Hearts*, here ascribed to God, is, their coming to fight against *Israel*; if so, then they had hardened their own Hearts, *ver.* 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Which because they could not have done, if God had not suffer'd them, it is therefore said, *it was of the Lord.* For had he endued them with Irresistible Grace, or destroyed their Human Nature, their hardening their Hearts would have been an impossible Thing. And for God not to hinder, or not to soften their Hearts, which the Text saith, they had hardened against *Israel*, was no more than to *permit*, what they committed by their *Option* and *Choice*; and this to serve the Ends of his Providence, that his People *Israel* might destroy those wicked *Canaanites* for their Sins, *the measure whereof they had filled up.* But this Objection will appear the more impertinent, if we consider, that for the *Canaanites* thus to harden their Hearts against *Israel*, that is, to *oppose* and *resist* them, when they were coming to take away their Country, could not be censured as a Sin in them, unless they had had a perfect Revelation, that

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that God had given their Land to his People *Israel*: Which does not appear in any History I could ever hear of; but supposing it had, then God's Revealing it to them, was far from having any hand in the hardening of their Hearts; all he did, was not softening what he found obdurate; and *not to soften*, is far from having any the least hand in the Obduration.

Eutychus. Pray, Sir, had God no hand in *Pharaoh's* Oppression of the Children of *Israel*, when he had determined it, and foretold it many Years before?

Epenetus. God *hates* all Sin, and therefore he can have no hand in either Willing or Effecting of it. Sir, will you, or any Man have any hand in doing what you hate? Now, if you mean, that God determined *Pharaoh's* Will to his Oppression, it is Blasphemy; if to the Permission of the Oppression, then it is nothing but Impertinence, because all must agree in that. Then as to *foretelling*, that is far from having *any hand* in the Event. The Physician foretels when his Patient shall have a Paroxysm in a Chronical Disease, ev'n whilst he is prescribing the usual Means of Prevention. Beside, is there no difference between the *End* of an Intention, the *Event* of a Prophecy, and the *Effect* of a Cause? Or had *Isaiah* any hand in the Birth of *Cyrus*, because he foretold it an hundred Years before *Cyrus* was born?

Eutychus. What do you think then, of that Place in 2 *Sam.* 12. 11, 12. in which God told *David*, that *He would take his Wives, and give them to his Neighbour, &c.* Nay, further, It is not said, God *suffer'd Absalom* to defile his Father's Concubines; but he tells *David*, what *thou hast done secretly, I will do in the sight of this Sun*; which seems to infer, that God had a *hand* in those Transactions, or an *Efficiency* in the Work.

Epenetus. Here I am more surpris'd, than at all those Texts you have hitherto urg'd in Behalf of your Cause: For if it be *literally* meant, (as you contend for,) that God did the same in Public, which *David* did in Private, the Blasphemy is such as cannot with Modesty be named; for what was that which *David* did in Secret, but his Adultery with *Bathsheba*? And can it be possibly imagined, that God could do the same Thing Openly? Yet so run the Words, *What thou hast done, I will do*; which Words, tho' *Active* in Sound, are *Permissive* in Sense only, and therefore spoken *Figuratively*. For God could not do *Actively* in the Sight of the Sun, what *David* had done in Secret; and had you but read to the end of the Story, 2 *Sam.* 16. 22. you wou'd have seen the Completion of God's Prophecy, and have found it was *Absalom* who did what you apply to God. *A Tent was spread* (saith the Text) *upon the top of the House, and Absalom went in unto his Father's Concubines in the sight of all Israel.* This is the Sin which you urge as an Instance, to shew how the Manner of God's Working is held forth to us by way of Action. But to pass by the Impiety, I must take Notice of the Foolishness of your Objection, *I will do this Thing* (saith God to *David*;) And what was this Thing? Why, it is express'd, *ver. 11. I will raise up Evil against thee*, that is, the Evil of Punishment; *I will take thy Wives and give them*, that is, permit *Absalom* to enjoy them. And indeed, there was not the least occasion of any more from God, because *Absalom* was ready enough of himself to do it, his own Flesh was sufficient to draw him on, *Jam.* 1. 14. And besides his own Flesh, he had *Ahithophel* to prompt him forward, *chap. 16. ver. 21.* Nay, both himself, and *Ahithophel* had the Devil at their Elbow, to urge and tempt them. Now, was not all this

this enough to bring the Wickedness about, but God himself must be affirmed to have a *Hand in it*, to be *Efficient* in it, to *Act*, to *Work*, to *Operate*, and that as a Necessitating Cause?

Eutychus. Since you have given me so much Satisfaction in this Particular, pray give me your Opinion of that Place, 2 Sam. 16. 10. where God is said, to have *bid Shimei curse David*: From whence, I have been told, that the Devil and Wicked Men cannot conceive, nor contrive, nor execute any Mischief, no, nor so much as endeavour its execution, any further than God himself doth *command* them; and that they are *compelled* to perform Obedience to such Commands.

Epenetus. A fine Doctrine indeed! How contrary is this to the Word of God? which saith, that God *hath no pleasure in wickedness*, Psal. 5. 4. that *he is of purer Eyes than to behold Evil, and cannot look on Iniquity*, Hab. 1. 13. that *he batest all abomination, and hath not caused any Man to Err*, that *he hath commanded no Man to do wickedly, neither hath he given any Man license to Sin*. And as to *Shimei's cursing David*, I take the Words to be only *Permissive* in Signification, tho' *Active* in Sound; because, if they must be taken in the literal Sense, one of these two things must follow; either *Shimei* did not Sin in *Cursing David* who was God's *Anointed*, but rather discharged his Duty, in doing just as God had bid him, or else that he Sinned by God's express Precept and Command. If you assert the first, then you will incur these two Evils, the one, by contradicting those Texts of Scripture wherein the *Cursing of Shimei* is affirmed to be a Sin, confessed by *himself*, 2 Sam. 19. 18, 19, 20. and punished by *Solomon* with Death it self, 1 King. 2. 44, 46. The other, by opening a Door, to the secure Commission of such a Damning Sin as *Cursing* is, and that, the most Treasonable *Cursing*

sing of Gods *Anointed*, Eccles. 10. 20. *Curse not the King, no, not in thy thought, &c.* teaching People, that it is no Sin, but rather the yielding Obedience to the Will of God. But if to avoid these Mischiefs of the First Proposition, you shall presume to assert the latter, namely, that he Sinned by God's express Precept and Command, (because the Words in their literal meaning seem to imply as much,) then you become Guilty of the most impious Absurdities that can be thought on: First, by contradicting those express Texts of Scripture just now mention'd, which express God's *hatred* of Sin, and shew that *he cannot endure it*; and in the next place, inferring, that a Man may Sin, by doing what God would have him do, nay, what he hath said he shall do; and so by consequence allowing that a Man may do his *Duty* by Disobeying God's Commands, or that God hath a two-fold Precept, directly contrary the one to the other; the one consisting of Things which *ought to be done*, but yet *impossible*, because it is *decreed they shall not*; the other of Things which *ought not to be done*, yet must be done of Necessity, because it is *decreed they shall*.

Eutychus. But is it not said expressly, 1 King. 22. 22. that *the Lord did put a lying spirit in the mouth of all his Propbers*? And in Job 1. we find *Satan* could do nothing that was Evil to *Job*, 'till he had obtained Power from God to do so. And it is said, Psal. 105. 25. that *God turned the hearts of the Egyptians to hate his People*.

Epenetus. In answer to these Passages of Holy Scripture, I think what I have said in the Answers immediately preceding this Objection, are more than sufficient; yet because in this last Text Psal. 105. 25. concerning *God's turning the hearts of the Egyptians to hate his People*, a blind Man may stumble; I answer, God did nothing to the *Egyptians*,

tians, but that which provoked them to *Jealousy* and *Fear*: which was the first thing wrought in them, and from that they naturally turned to *hatred*. But what was that which God did, which provoked them to that *Jealousy*, *Fear* and *Hatred*? Ev'n that which was very good, *ver. 24.* for, *He increased his People greatly, and made them stronger than their Enemies.* He *blessed* and *multiplied* his People *Israel*, for which the Envious *Egyptians* did *Fear* and *Hate*, and Conspire against them, *Exod. i. 9, 10.*

Eutychus Sir, There is one Text, *Ezek. 14. 9.* which I think can't well be evaded, as to the Point in hand; the Words are these, *If the Prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived that Prophet.*

Epenetus. These words must needs be figuratively spoken; because it is downright Blasphemy, to say, that God is a *Deceiver*. For as he who *Loves*, *Teaches*, *Reads*, or *Hears* in a Literal Sense, without a Figure, must needs be a *Lover*, *Teacher*, *Reader*, or *Hearer*; so he who doth *Deceive* without a Figure, must without a Figure be a *Deceiver*. And in the Judgment of the most learned Expositors, and by the allowed Interpretation of other Places of Scripture, the Meaning of this Place must undeniably be one of these two: Either *Deceiving* is nothing else, but God's *permitting* the False Prophet, for his Wickedness, to be Deceived by the *Deceiver*, that is, the *Devil*: Or else it must mean, the delivering him up to his own corrupt Heart, which is willing of it self to be deceived; and accordingly it follows in the very next words, *I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him.* Or it may be more fitly render'd, according to the Interpretation of *Grotius*, (who is styl'd *the Prodigy of Learning*,) not, *I have deceived*, but,
I will

I will deceive him, viz. By giving him such an End as he expects not.

Eutychus. I have found so much Satisfaction, from the Sense you have given of those Scriptures, at which I formerly stumbled, that I will take the liberty to mention two or three more; hoping, in so doing, your Patience will bear with my Importunity.

Epenetus. Sir, I shall think my Time well spent, be it never so much, if I can but set you right in this Particular.

Eutychus. It is said, *Rom. 11. 8, 9.* that God gave the Jews the spirit of slumber; Eyes that they should not see, and Ears that they should not hear, unto this day. And David saith, *Let their Table be made a Snare, and a Trap, and a Stumbling-block, and a Recompence unto them.*

Epenetus. I have enquired into this particular Place of Scripture, and I do not find it so meant by *St. Paul's* own words; tho' our *English Bibles* read, *God gave them Eyes that they should not see*: yet it is allow'd to be in the Original, *Eyes of not seeing, not to see, or Eyes which see not.* So that the Sense is evidently this, That the major part of the People, who made not use of that Grace which God had offered, but resisted Christ when he was preached in their Streets, did grow so obstinately Blind, (God withdrawing the Means so long Resisted, and so much Abused) as to fulfil the Prediction of the Prophet *Isaiah*, chap. 29. 10. or at least a Parallel to the Case of which the Prophet there speaks. And this doth further appear, from *St. Paul's* Citation of the *Psalmist*, *Psal. 69. 23. Let their Eyes be darkened that they may not see, &c. Rom. 11. 10.* Words spoken by *David*, not as a Curse, but a Prophecy, that the Things intended for their Welfare, ver. 22. would become their Trap. Their very Table, whose proper End was to Refresh and Feed

Feed them, would, by their Wickedness, be made their *Snare*. And ev'n the preaching of the Gospel Resisted by them, would *accidentally advance* their Obduration.

Eutychus. There is one Text more which I shall mention at this time, it is in 2 *Thess.* 2. 10, 11. where it is said, that the *Man of Sin* should come, with all *deceivableness of unrighteousness, in them that perish.* And for this cause God shall send them *strong Delusion, that they should believe a Lie.*

Epenetus. In this Text, you have exactly set forth the Method of those Persons, who if they can but find one Place of Scripture, which they think for their Purpose, immediately repeat it, without looking into the Context, either to observe the Words before or after. For, had you done so, you wou'd have found the Sense to have been this, That *because they received not the love of the Truth, that Truth which the Text saith, was offer'd, that they might be saved,* ver. 10. For *this Cause,* (or to punish this Wickedness,) God will suffer the *Man of Sin to be revealed,* ver. 3. *whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all Power, and Signs, and lying Wonders,* ver. 9. to come upon them with such Advantages of Strength and Subtilty, as would gain Credit with them, if not wonderfully restrained. For, pray take Notice, God is said in Scripture, to *send* what he *can* (but *doth not*) hinder from being *sent.* You know, we are taught to pray, *Lead us not into Temptation:* But I hope, you will not infer from hence, that God *doth lead any Man into Temptation;* our Meaning is, *Suffer us not to be led, or, Leave us not helpless in our Temptations; Permit us not to be tempted above our Strength; Let thy Grace be sufficient for us:* And from thence it follows, *But deliver us from Evil.* Thus, our Saviour may be said to have *sent* the Devils into

to the *Herd of Swine*, because, when they besought him, he gave Way to their Prayer, when they said, *Suffer us to Go*; he answer'd, *Go*, which must mean no more than this, *I suffer you to Go*; for he granted what they asked for, and they sked for *Permission* or *Sufferance*.

Eutychus. What you have said, is very just, and what, I think, may be fairly deduced from those Texts of Scripture; But then, this raises another Objection in my Mind, which is this, If those Places, which are so often *Active* in Sound, must be interpreted, as only *Permissive* in Signification; why may we not interpret other Scriptures in like Manner, where the like Expressions are used? as when the Lord saith, *I form the Light, I create Darkness*, Isa. 45. 7. *I have made the Earth, and created Man upon it*. — *My Hands have stretch'd out the Heavens*, Isa. 45. 12. Why may we not, I say, (according to your way of arguing,) interpret *these Verbs* which are *Active* in Sound, to be *Permissive* only in Signification; and say, that God only *permitted* Light and Darkness to be created, and *suffered* the Earth to be made, and Man to be created? &c. the Consequence of which, I tremble to name.

Epenetus. Truly, the Consequence of this Objection tends to downright *Poper*y, yea, to *Atheism* it self. For if no Texts must be *Figuratively* taken, then the *Papists* have a good Argument for *Transubstantiation*, Luke 22. 19. — *This is my Body*: Nay, the *Atheist* may jeer us, by telling us that which is really a *Tree*, cannot be really a *Man*, much less really a *God*: But Christ is really a *Tree*; and thus I prove it; that which is a *true Vine* (not a fictitious one) is really a *Tree*; but the Scripture saith plainly, that Christ is a *Vine*, John 15. 5. nay, a *true Vine*, ver. 1. therefore, Christ is really a *Tree*. Nay, is it not much better

better to say, That Christ is a *true Vine*, without a Figure, than to say, that God, without a Figure, did *harden Pharaoh's Heart*? and did *will that Absalom should do filthily against his Father*? and *bid Shimei curse David*? and *actually deceive the Prophet*, and the like? For certainly, there is a vast difference between these Texts, and those in your Objection; and therefore, must be interpreted Figuratively, or else they tend to make God guilty of Impious Facts, and asperse God with being the Cause of Sin as Sin. But when it is said, God *formed the Light, and created Darkness*, it cannot be pretended, that the Literal Acceptation of the Words, doth so much as *seem* to make God the *Author* of Sin. Dare you affirm, That God had as really a *Hand in Shimei's Cursing his King*, in *Absalom's polluting his Fathers Concubines*; in the *Egyptians hatred of his People Israel*; in *sending strong Delusions*; and as really a *Hand in Pharaoh's Obduration*, as in *creating Light and Darkness*; in *making the Earth*, and in *spreading out the Heavens like a Curtain*? I am perswaded you dare not. Then to what Purpose is this last Objection? I may say, to none, but to expose your Folly and Inconsiderateness.

Eutychus. My good Friend, you are very Earnest, and seem much Moved; but I cannot blame you: For, I must confess, there is but little Weight in this Objection, since I have heard your Sentiments on it: But I have other Reasons yet, which make me unwilling to part with this Doctrine; yet, I must defer the Mention of them 'till some other Opportunity, having, I fear, trespassed too far on your Good-Nature already.

Epenetus. The Experience I have had of your Friendship and *teachable* Disposition, has emboldened me to be so Peremptory in my Replies to your Objections; yet, I am zealously proud to serve you,

you, in any Thing within the compass of my Power: Neither wou'd I have you think I am tired with your Discourse.

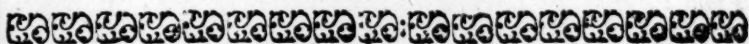
Eutychus. But, Sir, with your Approbation, we will wave our Discourse for this Time, and refer what I have still to relate to you, on this Point, to another Season.

Epenetus. Since you desire it, I submit.

The End of the Sixth Conference.



C O N F E R E N C E VII.



Epenetus.

WELL Overtaken, Sir: I little thought of seeing you to Day.

Eutychus. Nor I you; but since it is our Fortune to meet together, let us make much of this happy Opportunity; and if you think it not improper, we will enter into some diverting and edifying Subject, that so our Journey may not seem tedious.

Epenetus. I like your Motion very well.

Eutychus. Then (with Submission) I think nothing can conduce more to the Ends just mentioned, than to begin with what I was going to say to you, in our last Debate; which was, That I cannot tell how to part with the Doctrine of Absolute Election and Reprobation, because I have experienc'd so much Comfort by it: " Here I see
" the

“ the Streamings of Christ’s Blood, shed forth
 “ freely to Sinners : Here I am presented with Sips
 “ of Sweetness : Here I am taught the Power of
 “ Godliness ; not to be Puffed up with any good
 “ Works I can do, but to *Lean* upon Christ, to
 “ *Roll* upon Christ, and to *Rely* on Him for Salva-
 “ tion : ” Which I think a most comfortable Do-
 ctine, destroying all Pride in respect to our own
 Righteousness, and conducing to make us Meek
 and Lowly in our own Eyes.

Epenetus. I can’t see what Comfort you can
 receive from a *Murdering Principle*, or, what Plea-
 sure it can be to reflect, *that the greatest part of*
the World, are Damned, by an Absolute Decree.
 Beside, I am sure this Doctrine doth not tend
 either to the Mortification of our carnal Affe-
 ctions, or the subduing of our Passions, which
 are the only Comforts in this Life. For I am
 told, by Men of your Way, (a) “ He that hath
 “ oftentimes been Drunk, may yet have true Grace,
 “ and be in the Number of the Godly. Nay, there
 “ are worse Things than these, which a Man may
 “ commit, and yet be Godly, ” (saith Mr. *Bax-*
ter :) (b) “ How many Professors will rashly Rail,
 “ and Lie, in their Passions ? How few will take
 “ well a Reproof, but rather defend their Sin ?
 “ How many in these times, that we doubt not to be
 “ Godly, have been guilty of Disobedience to their
 “ Guides, and of Schism, and doing much hurt to
 “ the Church ? A very great Sin. *Peter, Lot,* and
 “ it’s likely *David*, did oft commit greater Sins. And
 “ yet, (c) A Man must be guilty of more Sin than
 “ *Peter* was, in Denying and Forswearing Christ,
 “ that is notoriously Ungodly ; yea, than *Lot* was,

(a) Mr. *Baxt.* Disput. 3. p. 329, &c. (b) *Id. ib.* p. 330.
 (c) *Id. ib.* p. 326, 327.

“ who was Drunk two Nights together, and com-
 “ mitted Incest twice with his own Daughters, and
 “ that, after the miraculous Destruction of Sodom,
 “ of his own Wife, and his own miraculous Deli-
 “ verance. Nay, a Man that is notoriously Un-
 “ godly (in the sense in hand) or unsanctified,
 “ must be a greater Sinner than Solomon was with
 “ his seven hundred Wives, and his three hundred
 “ Concubines; and gross Idolatries, when his heart
 “ was turn’d away from the Lord God of Israel,
 “ which appeared unto him twice, and commanded
 “ him not to go after other gods; but he kept not
 “ that which the Lord commanded. ” Thus far
 Mr. Baxter; from whom I think every Christian
 is bound in Conscience to dissent, and not to be-
 lieve one Word of it. What is here to make us
 Holy? And if we are not so, to make us fear the
 Terror of the Lord? Nay, Men of your Principle
 have told the World, that a Professor ought not
 to give way to such Temptations as to fear the
 Terror of the Lord. This is the Judgment of
 Mr. Caryl, Mr. Burroughs, Mr. Strong, Mr. Sprig,
 most powerful Men in their Time, who have re-
 commended a Book wherein is this Soul-saving
 Doctrine, namely, (a) “ In case you be at any time,
 “ by reason of the Weakness of your Faith, and
 “ Strength of your Temptations, drawn aside, and
 “ prevail’d with to transgress any of Christ’s
 “ Commandments, beware you do not thereupon
 “ call Christ’s Love to you in question, but believe
 “ as firmly that Christ loves you as dearly as he did
 “ before you thus transgressed; for this is a cer-
 “ tain Truth, As no Good in you, or done by you,
 “ did, or can move Christ to love you the more;
 “ so no Evil in you, or done by you, can move him

(a) *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, pag. 201. Edit. 3.

"to love you the less." Abominable Principles. Could worse come from the Bottomless-Pit? May not every notorious Sinner infer from hence, That since God, he was sure, did chuse him to Salvation, when he was yet in his Sins, and Natural State, and that as no Sin could provoke God's Displeasure against his Person *then*, ev'n when he was without Christ, much less can it do so *now*, when he hath made me accepted in the Beloved, Eph. 1. 6. For Mr. Perkins saith, *Sin doth not take away Grace, but illustrate and make it brighter.* And others have taught, *That those Sins which in the Wicked have the Nature of Punishment, have in the Faithful the Nature of Fatherly Correction.* (a) "That the very Elect, after their Effectual Calling, have cause sometimes to expostulate with God, for hardening their Hearts against his Fear, &c." And now I shall explain the Comfort arising from such Principles: "I take Comfort (saith the Doctor, just mentioned) when I find my Sins do not make a Final or Total Separation between my Soul and God; this may well tend to the strengthening of my Faith, and perswade my Soul, *That nothing shall be able to separate me from the Love of God, in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" So that every Sinner may comfort himself in his Wickedness: For, if he do but carry a Hatred towards Sin in the Spirit, or Inward Man, tho' he should find some Pleasure in the Act of Sin, as to the Flesh and Outward Man; yet, they need not fear the Domination of Sin, or State of Damnation; because they are told by your Party, that this is exactly the Case of the Regenerate: And therefore, the Apostle speaketh to their Comfort, what he found (say they)

(a) Dr. Twiss.

by Experience in his own Person, *Rom. 7. 14. &c.* *I am Carnal,* (saith the Apostle,) *sold under Sin.* For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the Law, that it is Good. Now then, it is no more I that do it, but Sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my Flesh) dwelleth no good Thing: for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the Good that I would, I do not: but the Evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but Sin that dwelleth in me. From all which, it is infered, That this Conflict with Sin, is a Sign and Mark of *Sanctification*; and that such Combatants, tho' they do sin, yet, if they bewail this their Imperfection, disallow of it, and condemn it, (as the Apostle did,) it shall never be imputed unto them, but to the *Corruption of their Nature*, and to that *Habitual Sin* that dwells in them. So that to be Regenerate, is still to be *Carnal*, and a *Captive to Sin*. Nay, you have heard already, that Mr. *Baxter* saith, (a) "It is exceeding hard to determine how great, many, or long the Sins of a true Believer may be." From all which, it is evident, that this Doctrine is far from bringing the Sinner to Repentance, but tends rather to confirm them in their Evil Courses; and therefore it is an Uncomfortable Doctrine, and not according to Holiness.

Eutychus. Here you run too fast; for many that believe and defend this Doctrine, are Holy and Good Men; and therefore, of it self, it openeth no way to loose Living, or wicked Practices,

(a) Mr. *Baxter's* Disput. of *Rights to Sacrament*, Disput. 3^d pag. 337.

but thro' the Wickedness of Men, who are wont to pervert the sweetest and surest Truths in Holy Scripture, to their own Damnation.

Epenetus. Suppose there be many of this Opinion good Men, yet it is no thanks to their Opinion that they are so, (the true and natural Genius of which, is to beget Sloth, to drown Men in Security, to countenance Men in carnal Liberty and Profaneness.) For if we do but measure this Opinion, not by the Lives of some few Men that hold it, but by the Sequels of that *Logic*, which Men of shallow Brains and ordinary Capacities may naturally draw from it; then I am sure, that no Man that hath truly suck'd it in, and understandeth the Force of it, but must either quite relinquish it, or live according to the natural Appointment of it, that is, licentiously. Neither can the Honesty of Men, possessed with these Principles, be any Proof of their being Orthodox. For the Epicures of old, and the Hereticks, Libertines, and Enthusiasts in our Age, urge, *that many among them, are honest and good Men.* Now altho' we grant this to be true, which was granted to the Epicures of old, whose swinish Doctrine, placed Man's Happiness in Pleasures of Sense; yet this Holiness of Conversation proceeded, not from the *Principles of their Opinion*, but from their own *virtuous Inclination*. And the Force of *Honesty* in so doing, appear'd to be more prevailing in them, than the Force of *Pleasure*, which they pleaded for: And as one said of them, so we may say of these; "As other Mens Doctrines are esteemed
" to be better than their Deeds; so these Mens
" Deeds seem to me, to be better than their Do-
"ctrines." And from hence, I believe, that it is either owing to God's Providence, that there is One Good and Holy, who is possess'd with this Principle; to God's Providence I say, who will

not suffer this Doctrine, for his own Glory's sake, and the good of Mens Souls, to have any Influence on their Lives and Conversations: or else it is owing to Mens resting in a *naked Speculation* of it; as Men are wont to do in many other Matters; never drawing any *Conclusions* from it, or having any thoughts of reducing it to Practice. Or lastly, It is owing to some good practical Inferences, which they have drawn from the Word of God, and so apply them to their Lives and Actions. Which Inferences cannot be drawn from the former Deductions. Such are these, for Example, 1 Pet. 1. 16. *Be ye holy, for I am holy.* Heb. 12. 14. *Without holiness no Man shall see God.* Matt. 7. 21. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in Heaven.* Gal. 6. 7. *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a Man soweth, that shall he also reap.* Luke 6. 46. *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?* Rom. 2. 13. *Not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law shall be justified.* Jam. 2. 26. *For as the Body without the Spirit is dead, so Faith without Works is dead also.*

Eutychus. All this is taught in the Doctrine of Absolute Election and Reprobation, for that does not tell any Man in particular, who are Elected, or who Rejected; but teacheth, that Men must get the Knowledge of their Election by good Works; and so by consequence, doth rather encourage, than stifle Holy and Honest Endeavours.

Epenetus. Not at all: For the Ignorance of a Man's particular State, (I humbly conceive) doth not alter the Case one jot: Because he that believeth in general, that many, nay, the greatest part of Mankind, without any regard to their good or evil Actions, are inevitably ordained to Damnation,

tion, and a few others to Salvation, is able out of these two general Propositions, to make the following Conclusions, and to reason thus with himself; Either I am absolutely *ordained* and *chosen* to Grace and Glory, or absolutely *cast off* from both: If I be *chosen*, I must of necessity Believe, and be Saved; because I am told, nay, and my Reason also tells me, that if the *End* be absolutely fixed, the *Means*, let them be what they will which conduce to the obtaining that *End*, must be fixed and determined too: But if I be cast off, I must as necessarily *not believe*, and be Damned. What need I therefore take Thought either way, about *Means*, or *End*? my *End* is pitch'd in Heaven, and the *Means* too; my final Perseverance in Faith, and so consequently, my Salvation; or my Continuance in Unbelief, and my Damnation. If I lie under this Necessity of Believing and being Saved, or of dying in Unbelief and being Damned; in vain do I trouble my self about *Means*, or *End*; I have my *Supersedeas*, my *Bounds*, *beyond which I cannot pass*: I may take mine Ease, *eat, drink, and be merry*, and so I will; it is enough for me to *sit down and wait* what God will do with me. Thus (it is probable) did *Tiberius* reason with himself; for it is reported of him, that he was the more negligent in Religion, because he was fully perswaded, that all things came to pass by *Destiny*. And in this manner (it is to be feared) do too many reason in their Hearts, some I have known my self to have done so; and by this very Conclusion, have encouraged themselves in loose and profane Living: yet there are many, who will hide the Grounds and Motives upon which they act, either through Modesty, or to avoid some further Ignominy: Because it is express'd, *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God*, Psal. 14. 1. So that I do from hence conclude, It matters not what

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these Men *teach*, but what they *should teach*, if they will speak consequently to their own Conclusions ; which are such as these ; I was created by God, to what End, God knows, (may the Sinner say :) If he predestin'd me to Destruction, by an immutable Decree, why do I *kick against the pricks*, and defraud my self of my Voluptuousness and Sensual Pleasure ? But if I was predestin'd to Life Eternal, how much soever I Sin, I shall be Saved in the Conclusion ; for God's Foreknowledge concerning me, cannot be frustrated or deceived. For what wonder is it, if after having swallow'd it down as an unquestionable Truth, That they are Vessels of a most Absolute Unconditional Election, and that they cannot *totally*, much less *finally fall from Grace*, to conclude, that tho' they commit *Murder*, or *Adultery*, or any other grievous Sins, (yea, and live Indulgently in them, for no short time, without Repentance, as *David* did) yet they have not lost the Holy Ghost, nor can possibly be in a State of Damnation ; so that their Sins can do them no great Prejudice ; they may make them *sorrowful*, but there is a Blessing annexed to that, *Mat. 5. 4.* yet they cannot make them *worse* ; somewhat less *cheerful*, but not less *safe* : They can fall no otherwise than *David* did ; “ not from “ a State of Salvation, (as one said) but only “ from the *Joy* of it.” To which I may add, If they can but Sin merrily, by stifling the Voice of God and Conscience, they shall not fall (if these Tenets be true) ev'n so much as from the *Joy* of Salvation. So, on the other hand, To what Purpose, I pray, do Men labour to obtain Everlasting Life, and avoid Eternal Death, if there be no Power and Liberty in their Hands to *chuse Life* or *Death*, but must of necessity take that which is assigned for them, be it *Life* or *Death* ? Is it not plain, that by all their Labour, they effect just nothing

thing at all? They may *Hear, Read, and Pray*, but all this will not procure God's Grace; so that all their Piety can do them no good; it may make them *Religious*, Isa. 48. 1, 2. Mic. 3. 11. but it cannot make them *Better*, for Damned they must be notwithstanding: But if they be *absolutely ordained to Salvation*, their Neglect of holy Duties, their Ignorance, their Love of Pleasures, and Continuance in a Course of Ungodliness, cannot bring them to Damnation, for they must be Saved. If so many Souls in a Parish be in this manner decreed to Heaven or Hell, the Minister Preacheth in vain, and the People Hear in vain: For their cannot one Soul be Saved, by all his or their Pains, which is *ordained to Hell*; nor one Soul be Cast away, by his or their Negligence, which is *appointed to Heaven*.

Eutychus. You seem, from what you have said, to infer, That the Saints or Godly may fall into such a State, wherein they cannot be Saved; whereas God's Counsel is *immutable* to preserve his Elect in the true Faith, ev'n *unto the end*; and through that *Faith*, to bring them to Salvation, and that *infallibly and necessarily*; because the Counsel of God cannot be made void by any Creature; nor can it be revoked (in regard of his Immutability) ev'n by God himself; *Having loved his own, he loveth them unto the end*, John 13. 1.

Epenetus. I grant, that God's Counsel is *immutable*; but God never decreed by his Counsel, that wicked Men who die in their Sins, shall be Saved, or that good Men who die in a State of Grace, shall be Damned. Now, if good Men are liable to fall into damning Sins, then the Saints and the Godly may fall into such a State, in which, if they should die without Repentance, they cannot be Saved: And this was the Case of *David and Solomon*, who fell from Grace, by resisting it,

it, in both Acceptations of the word *Grace*, as it is taken for Gracious and Holy Living, and as it is taken for the Favour God. For *David* committed two such Sins; of which the *Apostle* saith, 1 *Cor.* 6. 9, 10. that they that do such Things, *shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.*

Eutychus. Tho' *David* did resist God's Grace, yet he could not so resist, as to fall *finally*: For God had decreed the Repentance and Return of *David*; and therefore he could not die, until he had repented.

Epenetus. Then you allow (with me) that had *David* dy'd without Repentance, he had perished irrecoverably?

Eutychus. Yes, I do allow it.

Epenetus. Then you must unavoidably grant, that he fell from a State of Grace, into a State of a damnable and killing Nature, tho' he was a *Vessel* of Election, from which he could not have fell, had he continued in that State of Grace from which, you say, there is no falling away. But there is a *final* as well as *total* resisting of such Grace, as is sufficient for the Attainment of Glory. There are those that *grieve the holy Spirit of God*, Eph. 4. 30. There are that *quench Him*, 1 *Thess.* 5. 19. There are that resist the Holy-Ghost; *Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in Heart and Ears; ye do always resist the Holy-Ghost: as your Fathers did, so do ye*, Act. 7. 51. And sure the Comforter cannot be grieved, before he comes to comfort. The Spirit is not resisted before he strives. The Fire is not quenched, before it is kindled. And how can the Candle of the Wicked be said to be put out, Job 21. 17. if it was never lighted? And where lies the mischievous Qualifications, in saying, Grace may be resisted, the Holy-Ghost grieved, the Spirit quenched? Sure, not in the Insufficiency of God's Grace, nor in God,

Reprobation, fully Detected. 155

God, the Donor thereof, but in the Wills of the Wicked, who *love Darkneſs rather than Light*, John 3. 19. We find, that *Silver may become Dross*, because it did, *Iſa.* 1. 22. And the *Faithful City may turn Harlot*, ver. 21. Murder may, and hath dwelt, where *Righteouſneſs and Judg-ment were wont to lodge*. The *Dross* and the *Harlot* were none of God's Creatures. God made *Jerusalem a faithful City*, and that by the Gift of his ſpecial Grace; but it was her own wicked Will that made her a *Harlot*; which it could not have done, if that ſpecial Grace had been ir- reſiſtible. *Saul* had once the Spirit of God, and with Humility, reſuſed a Kingdom, *1 Sam.* 10. 22. but after his Preſerment, grew Covetous, En- vious, Cruel, and Profane, and in a deſperate Manner procured his own Death, *1 Sam.* 18. 9. and Chapters 23. 14. 22. 18. 28. 7. and 31. 4. Pray, my Friend, conſider what God ſaid to *Moses*, *Exod.* 32. 33. *Whoſoever hath ſinned againſt me, him will I blot out of my Book*. Now, who- ſoever is *blotted out*, muſt be implied to have been *written therein*, and that implies a ſpecial Grace. Do we not read, *Iſa.* 5. 4. of Men who reſiſted and ſinned againſt all the Means that could be uſed for their Amendment? and of others, who *would not be gathered*, after all the Eſſays and Motives that could be uſed? *Mat.* 23. 37. How many Chriſtian Profeſſors are now in Hell, who when they were Infants were fit and ſuitable for Heaven? *Mat.* 19. 14. For, if God's Bowels did yearn within him, and that upon the Impendence of but a Temporal Punishment only, which he was about to bring on a Heathen *Nineveh*, *Jonah* 4. 11. when he ſaid, *Shall not I ſpare Nineveh that great City, wherein are more than ſixſcore thou- ſand Perſons, that cannot diſcern between their right Hand and their left?* How much more will he

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extend his Compassion toward Infants born and baptized in the Christian Church, and made Members of his Mystical Body? Yet how many are there of such, who in their harmless Non-age were Babes of Grace, and yet have out-liv'd their Innocence, so as at last to be transform'd into *Vessels of Wrath*? I shall give you the Words of *Tertullian*, quoted by a Judicious Divine of our own, upon this Occasion; (a) *Saulum tam Dei Spiritus vertit in Prophetam, quam & malus Spiritus postea in Apostatam. Judam aliquandiu cum Electis deputatum postea Diabolus intravit*: That is, "Saul was turned into a Prophet by the Spirit of Holiness, as well as into an Apostate by the Spirit of Uncleanness. And the Devil entered into Judas, who for some time together had been deputed with the Elect." And the Words of St. *Augustin*, (b) *Si Regeneratus & Justificatus in malam Vitam sua Voluntate relabitur, certo is non potest dicere, non accepi, quia accepit Gratiam Dei suo in malum arbitrio libero amisit*: That is, "If the Regenerate and Justified shall fall away into a wicked Course of Living by his own Will and Pleasure, he cannot say, I have not received, because he hath fully lost that Grace of God which he had received, by that Will of his which was liberty to sin." But the Possibility of falling from Grace, after the receiving of the Holy-Ghost, nay, falling into Damning Sins, or a State of Damnation, is fully asserted in the 16th Article of the Church of England, and in the Homilies of our Church, concerning the Danger of falling away from God, and in her Office of Administration of Baptism. The contrary Opinion having been re-

(a) *Tertul. de Anim. cap. 1.*

(b) *Aug. de Grat. & Corr. cap. 6. & cap. 9.*

jected by all Antiquity, and too much confuted by the Experience of all Times; and (as a Learned Divine observes) brought of late into the Church, by the late Dissentions in *Calvin's Time*.

Eutychus. Sir you seem to advance very uncomfortable Doctrine, and to deny that there is any such thing, as the Grace of final Perseverance; which takes away all that most Comfortable Assurance, which the *Saints* are wont to find in themselves.

Epenetus. I wish there are not many, which have Sinned themselves into Hell, upon a Belief of the Impossibility of their coming thither: Neither dare I presume upon any other Assurance of my Salvation, than that which the Gospel affords me, and there I am told, That if I am faithful unto Death, I shall receive a Crown of Life, Rev. 2. 10. That he that endureth unto the End, the same shall be saved, Matt. 24. 13. And as to the Signs and Marks of my Election, it is said, He that doth Righteousness, is of God; but, He that committeth Sin, is of the Devil, 1 Joh. 3. 7, 8. And what can be a greater Comfort, than this, to know, that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord? 1 Cor. 15. 58. But then, we must not be puffed up, Be not high-minded, but fear, Rom. 11. 20. Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall, 1 Cor. 10. 12. Watch and Pray, saith our Saviour, lest ye enter into Temptation, Matt. 26. 41. But if no Man can fall, then there is no need of Prayer for Perseverance. I am sure the Apostle, Hebr. 6. 4, 5, 6. saith, That it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy-Ghost, tasted the good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come; if they fall away, to renew them again unto Repentance. Now the Graces which the Apostle here speaketh of,

of, are not ordinary and common, but special and excellent Graces; such as Illumination, Faith, a Relish of God's Word, and a Taste of Heaven. And the Persons spoken of, are Apostates, such as are under a possibility of falling away for ever, and consequently Reprobates: Whereas if it were impossible that good Men should fall from Grace, it would be absurd and ridiculous in the *Apostle* to warn against it; because no solid Exhortation can be built on a Danger not possible to come to pass. The like Expression we have, *Heb. 10. 26. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sins, &c.* From whence we may collect, that Men who Sin willingly and unpardonably, may receive the Knowledge of the Truth, yea, and be *sanctified* by the Blood of the Covenant, and *the Spirit of Grace*, ver. 29. They may, saith St. Peter, *escape the pollutions of the World*, 2 Pet. 2. 20. that is, be washed from their former Sins, by Repentance; they may *receive the Word with joy*, Matt. 13. 20. and the *unclean spirit may go out of them*, Matt. 12. 43. and many more excellent Graces they may have beside, and yet notwithstanding, may *turn from the holy Commandment delivered unto them*; may return with the Sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire. And sure, God never washed, but to make clean. We read, 1 Tim. 1. 19. that some in the Apostles time made *Shipwreck of Faith and a good Conscience*: which could not be an Historical Faith only; for it is only true Faith that is productive of a good Conscience. Neither dare I think, that all those Gifts and Graces conferred on the Sons of Men, were given them by Almighty God, to the End they might abuse them, and so purchase to themselves the greater Damnation: Or, that they might do good to o-
thers

thers only, and none to themselves. No, I believe the Most High God, who is the Lover of Souls, as he gave us the Gifts of *Nature*, so did he those of *Grace*, that we might obtain Salvation. For if God left the Heathen *without Excuse*, in those Gifts which are only Natural to them, as Reasonable Creatures; how much more are we *without Excuse*, who partake in those Gifts, which make the Possessors of them (like the Young Man in the Gospel) not far from the Kingdom of Heaven? So that the End that God aimeth at, in those excellent Talents and Graces he bestows on the Sons of Men, is, that they may be Converted, and Eternally Saved. But to return, why did St. Paul endeavour so earnestly to keep God's Commandments? Why did he fight with the Temptations of the Devil, the Allurements of the World, and his own Corruptions? Why did he keep his Body so low, by Watchings and Fastings, and other severe Exercises of Holy Discipline? Can we think he did all this at Random, uncertain whether he should obtain any Good, or prevent any Mischief thereby? No, certainly, he tells us himself, it was all done, to prevent his being a *Cast-away*, 1 Cor. 9. 26, 27. Now certainly, if nothing that he could have done, would have availed any thing towards his Salvation; if all was to be done for him by *Christ*; if his Salvation was Absolutely *determined* in Heaven, not only before he was born, but before the World it self was made; and all this, not on account of any Good that could be done by him, but meerly of God's good Pleasure; It follows from hence, that St. Paul was but poorly read in Divinity, or that his Faith, like St. Peter's, was very weak, to fear where no Fear was; he might have sat down, and have spared himself all that Labour, and have been sure, that nothing that he could have done,

or

or left undone here on Earth, was able to revoke or make void what was ratified and confirmed by the God of Heaven.

Eutychus. But I am taught ———

Epenetus. I hope you will pardon my Rudeness, in interrupting you; my Way lying Cross these Fields, I am obliged to break off our Discourse: But I will hear what you have further to urge (God willing) the next Opportunity. I am, Your's, with all Respect.

Eutychus. Sir, since we must part, I thank you kindly for your Company, and am, Your very humble Servant.

The End of the Seventh Conference.



CONFERENCE VIII.



Eutychus.

MY Good *Epenetus*, how do you do? How pleasant is it to see a discreet and virtuous Friend? and such I have found you to be.

Epenetus. I am at a loss to return your Complement.

Eutychus. I was never a Friend to Ceremonies and Complements: I speak from real Experience, you are a Friend, that have in a great measure eased and unloaded my Mind, clear'd and improved

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improved my Understanding, rectified those Mistakes I lay under, and almost wholly removed (and I pray God, that you may not almost, but quite take away) all those *Doubts* and *Scruples* which formerly disturbed me.

Epenetus. I will endeavour to give you that Satisfaction my ordinary Abilities will afford: And how Happy shall I think my self, in being an Instrument of turning any one Person from those Errors, or false Notions of God and Religion, they had at any time imbib'd!

Eutyclus. To proceed then, with what I was going to offer, when we were last together; I am taught, that tho' a godly Man lose not his Justification by gross Sinning, yet he contracts such an Incapacity of coming to Heaven, in that State, which must be removed by Repentance, or else he cannot be saved. But however, in these Steps, God preserveth in *them*, that his *immortal Seed* (by which they were once *born again*) that it *die not*, nor is *lost* by them; but afterward by his Word and Spirit, he *effectually and certainly reneweth them again unto Repentance*.

Epenetus. This is exactly agreeable to that Passage of Mr. *Baxter*, cited before, namely, *It is exceeding hard to determine how great, many, or long the Sins of a true Believer may be*. And indeed, if God preserves that Immortal Seed in them, and doth *effectually and certainly* renew them again unto Repentance, then they may cast away all Care; for they are in no Danger of Miscarrying, though they should fall into grievous Sins, whereby they impair their Graces, and harden their Hearts, and wound their Consciences, hurt and scandalize others, and bring Temporal Judgments upon themselves; yet they are, and shall be kept by the *Power of God through Faith unto Salvation*. This

is the Faith of some. Which if true, in vain did David address himself in that needless *Petition*, to have a *new Heart created*, and a *right Spirit renewed within him*, Psal. 51. if that Seed of God, and Life of Faith, and Sincerity of Heart, were still in him, as before. I am sure it appears plain, from what our Saviour said to his Disciples, *Mat. 24. 13.* that Men may perish, who have received sufficient Grace to bring them to Salvation, if they would but have persevered in it. *He that shall endure unto the End, the same shall be saved.* And *Rom. 11. 22.* If ye *continue in his Goodness*, ye shall not be cut off. Now, can a Man arrive at a Place, when he is not in the direct Way that leads thither? Our Saviour might then indeed, instruct us to turn into our Way, if we were out, but he would never exhort us to continue in a wrong Path. Besides, can that be cut off, that was never in the Vine? *I am the Vine*, saith Christ, *ye are the Branches.* *He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much Fruit; for without me, ye can do nothing.* If a Man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a Branch, and is withered, John 15. 5, 6. Sure, our Saviour's Words, in *ver. 4.* would be a very unnecessary Command for Perseverance, when he saith, *abide in me, and I in you*, if it were impossible for those who were true Branches, ever to be broken off. And how could St. Paul say of some, (as I intimated formerly,) that they made *Shipwrack of Faith and a good Conscience?* 1 Tim. 1. 19. Can that be shipwrack'd, that was never in the Vessel? And can we call that a *Shipwrack*, which whether it had happened or no, we must notwithstanding, have undoubtedly perished?

Eutychus. Then I perceive you are of Opinion, that God doth give *sufficient Grace* to every Man

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Man under the Gospel, to enable them to *work out their Salvation*; and that they may perish, through the Abuse and Neglect of it.

Epenetus. That's my Belief; for God gives, or is ready to give (if we make no new Obstructions) that Grace which is *sufficient* to the obtaining of *Faith*; perhaps, not immediately, but Grace sufficient to *use the Means*; Grace to do *more* than we do, in order to the obtaining of it. It is God that giveth us every *Talent* that we have; and he hath told us, he that maketh a *good Use* of what is given, shall receive more, *Mat. 25. 29.* But then he has also told us, That he that maketh not a *good Use* of what he has given him, it shall be also *taken away*. If Men *shew not the same Diligence* to improve that Grace; if they should make a fair Beginning, and yet hold not to the *full Assurance of Hope unto the End*, *Hebr. 6. 11.* if they *leave their first Love*, as the Angel of the Church of *Ephesus* did, *Rev. 2. 4.* if they should *run well*, as *St. Paul* said the *Galatians* did, *Gal. 5. 7.* and if it is undeniable, that all this may, yea, and has come to pass; then it is exceeding plain, that a *Believer* may fall from that Grace which would have been *sufficient* to his Salvation, had he not abused and resisted it?

Eutychus. I should not know how to withstand your Argument, if I could discern that *Comfort* in this Doctrine, which methinks, there is in the other.

Epenetus. The Doctrine of *Unconditional Election and Reprobation*, does indeed afford wilful and obstinate Sinners a great deal of Comfort or Encouragement to continue in their Sins; because it maketh Sin, to be no Sin, but only in Opinion. We are wont to say, *Necessity has no Law*; and if so, then Actions which in themselves are Evil,

if under the dominion of *Absolute Necessity*, late Transgressions of *no Law*, and consequently no Sins. For Sin is the transgression of the Law, 1 John 3. 4. That Sin is nothing but a meer Opinion, by this Doctrine, will appear from the Words of those Men that have maintained it; for they make that to be no Sin in the *Elect*, which they esteem grievous and unpardonable Sins in the *Reprobate*. "There is no Sin, (say they) whether against the first or second Table, except that one Sin against the Holy Ghost, but the *Elect* may, and oftentimes do fall into it: But there is this great difference between the Regenerate and Unregenerate; for tho' they commit the same Sins, yet the Reason, Mode, and Exit hereof is far different." To this Purpose speaks Mr. Baxter, in his Preface to his *Grotian Religion*, sec. 18. "That the Sin of Peter, David, &c. was exceedingly (in regard of Manner, Ends, Concomitants, &c.) different from the like Fact in a graceless Man." Now to what Purpose was the Son of God made Man; and being Man, made a Sacrifice for Sin? Why was the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments ordained? To what End was Heaven and Hell propounded? Why are Exhortations, Perswasions, or any other Means used to hinder Men from complying with Sin, if it be nothing but a meer Opinion only? Thus far of the *Comfortableness* of this Doctrine. I shall now, (by your Leave) shew the *Uncomfortableness* of it, and prove it to be full of Desperation, both to them which stand, and to those that are fallen; to Men out of Temptation, and to Men in Temptation: And this I shall do two manner of ways; First, shew that it leadeth Men into Despair. And Secondly, shew that it leaverth them in it. 1st, This Doctrine leadeth Men into Temptation,

ev'n the most insuperable, sharpest, and most dangerous the Tempter hath, and that is (as I said) Despair of God's Mercy. For how easy is it for the Devil to perswade any Man that maketh Absolute Reprobation a part of his Creed, *That he is one of those Absolute Reprobates?* Because there are far more Absolute Reprobates, ev'n an hundred to one, than Absolute Chosen Ones. And indeed, a Man hath a great deal more Reason, by this Principle, to think he is one of the huge Multitude of inevitable *Cast-aways*, than one of that *little Flock* for whom Christ hath prepared a Kingdom. In Nature, Excellent things are few; there are but *few* Diamonds, to Pebbles and other Stones; *few* Lilies and Violets, to Briars and Brambles. And as our Saviour saith, *Wide is the Gate, and broad is the Way that leadeth to Destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; so hath he told us, strait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way which leadeth unto Life, and few there be that find it.* From whence it is very easy for a Sinner to infer, (that is possess'd with the Principles of Absolute Reprobation, yea, and to conclude too,) That he is one of those *many*, than to think, that he may, by Repentance, become one of the *few*. 2dly, It leaveth Men in Despair. Suppose you should hear a poor Soul groaning under the Burden of his Sins, and tormented with the frightful Apprehensions of his being rejected by Almighty God from all Eternity, crying out, in the Bitterness of his Soul, "Wo is me; I am a Cast-away; I am Absolutely rejected from Grace and Glory." What Comfort could you administer to him, from your Principles? Should you tell him, that God had not cast him off, *that he beareth nothing that he hath made*, but beareth a Love to all Men, and to him among the rest: Might

he not reply, That tho' God *hateth* no Man, as he is his *Creature*, yet he *hateth* a great many as they are *Sinners in Adam*? For God hath a two-fold Love; a *general Love*, which extendeth to Outward and Temporal Blessings only; and in this Manner, he loveth all Men; and a *special Love*, by which he provideth Everlasting Life for Men; and with this he loveth only a very few; which out of his alone Will and Pleasure, he hath singled out from the rest. But I (may he reply) am under God's *general Love*, and not under his *special*. If we should further tell him, That God so far loveth all Men, and desireth their Eternal Good; that he *would have All to be Saved*, and no Man to Perish, nor *him* in particular. Why, he is taught by your Doctrine, That the word *All*, is taken two Ways; one, for all Sorts and Conditions of Men, High and Low, Rich and Poor, Bond and Free, &c. The other, for all particular Men in the several Sorts and Ranks. God *would have all Men to be saved* in this first Sense, that is, *all Sorts*; but he would not have All to be saved in this second Sense, that is, *all particular Men of those Sorts*: Some (may he say) of my Country, my Calling, my Condition of Life, may be Saved; but not *All*, and every One, nor me in particular. Nay, he may further object, that tho' it be really true, that God *would have all particular Men to be saved* (as the Scripture saith,) 1 Tim. 2. 4. yet he willeth it only with a *revealed Will*, not with a *secret*; for with that, he will have Millions to be Damned. Under this *revealed Will* am I, not under the *secret*. If we should tell him, That God *would have all Men to be Saved*, and come to the Knowledge of the Truth; and as he would have no Man to *perish*, so he would have *all Men to repent*: and therefore he calleth

to *All*, in the Preaching of the Word, to one as well as the other. He may answer, by your Principles, that God hath a double Call, an *Outward*, by the Preaching the Word in Mens Ears, an *Inward*, by the Irresistible Work of Grace in their Hearts. The *Outward Call*, is a part of God's Outward Will; with that he calleth every Man to Believe: The *Inward* and *Effectual* Call, is a part of his Secret Will; and with that he calleth not every Man to Believe, but a very few only, whom he hath inevitably *ordained to Eternal Life*: And therefore by the *Outward Call*, which I enjoy in Common with Others, I cannot be assured of God's Good-will and Meaning, that I should *Believe*, *Repent*, and be *Saved*. But if you should endeavour to remove this Objection, by telling him, that *Christ came into the World to save Sinners, and to seek and to save that which was lost*; and *is the Propitiation, not for our Sins only*, (that is, the Sins of a few particular Men, or the Sins of all sorts of Men) *but also for the Sins of the [Whole] World*; therefore he came to save thee, and to be a Propitiation for thy Sins; for thou art one of them that were *lost*, and thou art *one of the whole World*: yet ev'n here he may answer, (if your Doctrine be true) that the *[World]* is taken two ways in Scripture; *largely*, for all Mankind; *strictly* and in a *limited* sense, for the Elect or Believers only: In this sense, Christ died for the World, namely, for the World of the *Elect*, for the World of *Believers*. Or if it be true, that he died for all Mankind, yet he died for them but after a sort; his Death was *Sufficienter*; he did enough to Redeem all, if God would have had it so; his Blood (ev'n the least Drop of it) was sufficient to have ransomed Ten Thousand Worlds: but his Death was not *Intentionaliter*; God never intended

that he should shed his Blood for all and every Man, but for a *few Selected Ones* only, with whom it is not my Lot to be numbred. — Thus we may see, that no solid Comfort can be fastned upon a poor Soul rooted in this Opinion, when he lieth under this horrible Temptation of Despair, and therefore I conclude it to be a Doctrine contrary to the Word of God, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ; which Gospel bringeth *glad Tydings*, and is an inexhaustible Fountain of sweet Consolation to the Sons of Men, in all the *Changes and Chances of this mortal Life*. *These things were written* (saith the Apostle) *that by Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures we might have Hope*. But what *Hope*, what *Comfort* can those Men have, who think there are many, whom God hath utterly rejected long before they were born, nay, before the World it self was made, from Grace here, and Glory hereafter? And if I may trespass upon your Patience a little longer, both the *Comfort* and the *Hope* that is in this Doctrine, will plainly appear by the two following Examples. The first is, of one *Petrus Illosuanus* a School-Master in *Hungary*, of whom it is credibly reported, that going to *hang himself*, he signify'd, by a Writing which he left in his Study, for the Satisfaction of his Friends and Countrymen, the true Cause of that his unnatural Fact: In that Writing, he delivered these three Things: *1st*, That he was of *Calvin's* Opinion, That Men are not dealt withal according to their Works, Good or Evil; but there are more hidden Causes of Mens Eternal Conditions. *2dly*, That he was one of that woful Company of Absolute Reprobates, *a Vessel prepared to Dishonour*; and that therefore, (tho' his Life had been none of the worst) yet he could not possibly be Saved. *3dly*, That being unable to bear those dreadful Appre-

Apprehensions of Wrath with which he was Affrighted, he Hang'd himself. For these are some of his last Words, there recorded ; (a) " I go " to those Infernal Lakes, an Eternal Reproach to " my Country : I commend you to God, whose " Mercy is denied to me." The Second Example is of *Francis Spira*, an *Italian Lawyer*: This *Spira*, about the Year 1548, being a Lawyer, and excessively Covetous of Money, he gave himself over to an inordinate Love of the Things of this World : " Good Causes (says he) " I either defended deceitfully, or sold them to " the Adversaries perfidiously. Ill Causes I maintained with all my might. I willingly opposed " what I knew to be true, and either betrayed, " or perverted the Trust committed to me." This Man, against his Knowledge and Conscience, did afterwards openly *abjure* his Religion, and subscribe to *Popery* ; that thereby he might Preserve his Life, Goods and Liberty. Not long after this, he fell into a deep Despair, and seemed as it were hung up alive in Chains, by Justice from Heaven ; being wounded with such Distress of Conscience, that he could never find any Redress, but ended his Days in a woful Despair of God's Mercy, crying, " That he was Undone for ever ; " That there never was such a Monster as he was ; " That never Mortal Man had such Experience " of God's Anger and Hatred as he had," &c. To Comfort him came many Divines of Note : But against all the Arguments they used to Comfort him, he opposed two things in particular ; first, the greatness of his Sin : " It was a

(a) *Discedo igitur ad lacum infernalem æternum dedecus patriæ meæ ; Deo vos commendo, cujus misericordia mihi negata est.*

“ Sin (saith he) of a deep die, committed with
 “ many urging and aggravating Circumstances;
 “ and therefore could not be forgiven.” This
 Argument they quickly took from him, and con-
 vinced him, by the Example of St. Peter, that
 there was nothing in his Sin that could make it
 Unpardonable: Peter that committed the same Sin
 of denying his Master, and with some more odious
 Circumstances, Repented, and was Pardoned, and
 so (no doubt) might he. 2dly, he opposed his
 Absolute Reprobation, and with that, put off all
 their Comforts. “ Peter (saith he) repented in-
 “ deed, and was Pardoned, because he was *Elected*:
 “ As for me, I was utterly *Rejected* before I was
 “ born; and therefore I cannot possibly Repent,
 “ or be Saved.” If any Man be *Elected*, he shall
 be Saved, tho’ he have committed Sins for num-
 ber many, and Hatred in degree: but if he be
 one of the *Castaways*, he shall be inevitably Con-
 demned, tho’ his Sins be small and few. (a) “ A
 “ Reprobate must be Damned, be his Sins many
 “ or few, great or little; because God’s Mercy and
 “ Christ’s Merits belong not to him.” Where
 now, I pray you, is the Comfort you so much
 talk of, in this Doctrine? Much, I must confess,
 to the *persevering* Sinner, but none to the *wound-*
ed and *afflicted* one; it leaveth them, without any
Balm to heal their *Wounds*, and *Bruises*, and *pu-*
trified Sores: For it rendreth every Minister of
 the Gospel unable to comfort them, or apply the
 Merits of Christ’s Death unto them. If he tell
 them, that God *would have all Men to be Saved*;
 that Christ *died for all*; it is what they do not

(a) *Nihil interest an multa, an pauca, an magna, an parva
 sint, quando nec Dei misericordia, nec Christi sanguis, quicquam
 ad eos pertinet.*

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believe. For God will have a great many to be Damned, and to have no part in Christ, (say they.) If he tell them they are *Believers*, and truly *repenting Sinners*, and therefore no Reprobates; for *Faith* and *Repentance* are infallible Fruits of Election, and Arguments of a State contrary to what they fear; they will answer, *they are not Believers*, &c. Now how must he convince them that they are?

Eutychus. By the outward Acts of *Faith* and *Repentance* which he seeth visible and apparent in them: *Blessed are they that mourn*, (saith our Saviour, *Mat. 5.*) *for they shall be comforted.*

Epenetus. The Elect being in this Condition, may indeed be *comforted*; but these Proofs are only probable, ev'n to the Best; but no Proofs at all to a Man in Temptation or Despair. Grace is offer'd to some, with a Mind of communicating it unto them; therefore it [may be] that I am one of them to whom it is so offer'd; but this is no demonstrative Proof that it is so; because Effectual and Saving Grace, are, by an Absolute Decree, deny'd to all Reprobates. And may not those in Despair (who are possess'd with these Principles) reply, If this be all the Evidence you can give, for my not being a *Reprobate*, you are a *miserable Comforter*, a *Physician of no Value*. For the External Acts of *Faith* and *Repentance* may be counterfeited: The Devil may seem to be an *Angel of Light*: *Wolves* may go in *Sheeps Clothing*: *Judas* may make the World believe, by his preaching and following of Christ, that he is a true Apostle: And *Simon Magus*, tho' he be in the Gall of Bitterness, and Bond of Iniquity, may be thought, by his receiving of *Baptism*, to be a true Believer: And so may any Hypocrite, by some outward Acts of *Faith* and *Repentance*, delude the
best

best Discerner of Spirits among the Sons of Men, and gain the Opinion and Esteem of a true Penitent and Believer. But it is a Maxim, *Bonum non oritur nisi ex integris*. For Actions externally Good, or Good in Appearance, may be Evil indeed for want of a good *Rule, Manner, End*, or some other Good Circumstances, with which an Action that is Good must be cloathed. Which being so, you are still deceived in us, (may they say) for you cannot see more in us, than hath been seen in many Reprobates; and therefore we may be, nay, we are Reprobates still. Thus you may see no *Comfort* can be possibly instilled into the afflicted Souls of those Men, who are firmly rooted and grounded in this Doctrine of Absolute and Unconditional Election and Reprobation. From whence it follows, that neither the *Gospel*, nor the *Ministers* thereof, are able to afford any Solid Comfort to one Man of a hundred, who shall fall into this Temptation and Trouble, but they must bear the Burden of this Distemper as well as they can.

Eutychus. I must confess, there is but cold Comfort in all this; neither could I have thought, that this Doctrine was attended with such Consequences.

Epenetus. My Dear Friend, if you had but impartially weighed the Matter, and let *Scripture* and *Reason* have sate on the Judgment-seat, you would long ago have found it inconsistent with God's Sincerity, Equity and Justice, to *Call, Command, Exhort, and Intreat* those Men to *Faith and Repentance*, and to Promise them *Pardon and Salvation*, when at the same time, by his Immutable and Everlasting Decree, he had put those very Persons under an inevitable Necessity of Unbelief and Impenitency, that so he might have an Op-
por-

portunity of Glorifying his Justice in their Eternal Damnation. Can a dejected Soul cast Anchor upon such deluding Offers and Invitations? To be told in Scripture, *that he that believeth not, shall be damned*, Mark. 16. 16. and that, *without holiness, no Man shall see the Lord*, Hebr. 12. 14. And yet to be taught also by some Men, that Common Grace is insufficient to work in us that saving Faith, and that special Grace shall be conferr'd upon a few selected Persons only, called the *Elect*; that this Work of Regeneration shall be accomplished in *them* only, and that in an Irresistible manner: That these Persons were designed and cull'd out for Salvation, without Respect or Fore-knowledge, either of Faith or Repentance, or any good Quality whatsoever in them, as antecedent to their Election; and that therefore no Performance of ours can procure us to be *Elect*. That the Sins of the *Elect*, proceed from the common Infirmary and Corruption of Nature which hath infected All; and that tho' they should at any time transgress *Any* of Christ's Commands, yet Christ's Love to them is not to be called in question, but they are as firmly to believe Christ loves them as dearly, as he did before they thus transgressed. And lest they should stop in the Career of Sin, they are told, that it is exceeding difficult, to determine how Many, Great, and Long the Sins of a true Believer may be. But on the contrary, that the same Sins, which in the *Elect* are venial and pardonable, are, in the Reprobate, of a damning Nature; nay, that all their Duties and good Actions are the Effects of common Grace only, and insufficient to work a real Conversion in them; because they were left out, or passed by in *Massa*, before the Foundation of the World; and so never had a true Interest in the Merits
and

and Intercession of Christ; and therefore Saving Grace was never procur'd for them: And tho' Common Grace could not advance them *higher*, yet the Abuse of it shall thrust them down *lower* in Everlasting Torments. So that it is impossible, nay, it is impertinent and fruitless; for one of these poor Wretches to be solicitous about their Salvation; all the Industry they can use, will never be able to turn *Common Grace* into *Saving Grace*: God having by his Immutable and Eternal Decree, ev'n debarr'd *himself* of a Power to give, as well as deny'd to *them* a Power to receive that Grace that doth accompany Salvation.

Eutychus. This does indeed, seem very Cruel and Unnatural in Almighty God, to offer Salvation to those whom he hath resolved shall never enjoy it, and yet cast them into Hell, after he had determined to shut them out of Heaven; and this before they were born, or had done either Good or Evil. But then I have been taught, That if Christ had *seriously* desired the Salvation of all Men, he would undoubtedly have removed those Impediments, which he knew would hinder their Salvation.

Epenetus. Our Saviour might be said, not to desire *seriously* the Salvation of all Men, had he not given them *sufficient Means*: Then indeed, God's Offers would have been *serious* only to those *few* to whom he had vouchsafed the *Means*. But Christ is wanting to none, in what is requisite to their Safety, if they are not wanting to themselves; and therefore his Desire is *Serious*, tho' not *Possionate* or *Unreasonable*, so as to save Men by *Force*, either against, or without their Wills. He doth not violently remove those Impediments that hinder their Salvation by any Acts of *meer Power*, but deals with Men as *free Agents*, who could not

Reprobation, fully Detected. 175

not otherwise be fit for Rewards or Punishments. Christ does indeed take away the *Heart of Stone*; where it is really taken away, and none but *He* can do that Work; but then *He* does it not *Irresistibly*, and therefore in many the Stone remains *not taken away*; where yet he mercifully attempts the doing of it, by such kind of Means as are wise and congruous, and in themselves *sufficient*, if Mens perverse and obstinate Wills did not render them *ineffectual*, which refuse to bear the Voice of the Charmer, charm he never so wisely. *Ye will not come to me, that ye might have Life*, saith Christ to the obstinate Jews, John 5. 40. For when God Commands, he is sincerely willing to be Obedied: If He requireth any thing from us, he is sure first to give it to us, and then mercifully accepts our Compliance with his Demands: But then, as I said before, he *compelleth* no Man, he *forceth* no Man, either to be Happy or Miserable, do what he can to the contrary. Can that God, who is said to be *slow to Anger*, Psal. 103. 8. but *abundant in Goodness and Truth*, Exod. 34. 6. who is said to be *delighted with Mercy*, Micah 7. 18. but Justice is call'd *his strange Work*, Isa. 28. 21. Can he, I say, take Delight in the Misery of his Creatures? No, certainly, *He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men*, Lam. 3. 33. He bestows *Mercies* upon us every Day, but his *Judgments* we rarely feel; then he inflicts but now and then sparingly, and after a long time of Forbearance, and when there is *no Remedy*, 2 Chr. 36. 15, 16. *All the Day long have I stretched forth my Hands unto a Disobedient and Gainsaying People*, Isa. 65. 2. As if he had said, I have been patient a long time, and in all that time I have not been idle, but been employed in Exhorting, Promising, and shewing Mercy, that so I might do you Good.
He

He is a God (as our Liturgy styles him) whose Nature and Property is always to have Mercy, and to Forgive. He waits for the Conversion of Sinners, as Husband-men do after their Tillage and Labour, for the Fruits of the Ground; and at last of all, it is with much ado that he is moved to punish, Gen. 6. 5, 6, 7, 12, 13. *The wickedness of Man was great upon the Earth, and all flesh had corrupted his way, and then it was that God thinketh of a Flood. He would not destroy the Amorites, till their wickedness was full. He found the Sins of Sodom to be answerable to their cry, yet ev'n then, he would have spared all the place, if he could have found but ten righteous Persons within it. Nay, he would have spared Jerusalem, if the Prophet, by his searching, could have found but one Man, who did execute Judgment, and seek the Truth, Jer. 5. 1.* What a slender Humiliation made him spare wicked Ahab and his House a long time? 1 King 21. 29. And how willingly did God pardon Nineveh, that great City, upon their Repentance, whose Wickedness cried to the Lord for Vengeance? Jonah 1. 2. Yea, he expresses himself, and his Kindness towards us, in the most endearing Affection, and tenderest Compassion we are able to conceive, ev'n that of a Father to his Son, a tender Mother to her Child, and of the most Affectionate Brutes to their Young Ones. Nay, his Mercy surmounts all these Comparisons: *If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your Children; how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask him?* Matt. 7. 11. From whence it is plain, that those Words [*how much more*] doth imply, that God's Love outstrips that of a Father's. And so it doth that of a Mother's too. Women are most Compassionate and Indulgent towards their Chil-

Children which suck their Breasts, because they are the Fruit of their Wombs, and a part of themselves: And yet Mothers may forget ev'n their sucking Children. *Can a Woman forget her sucking Child, that she should not have compassion on the Son of her Womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee, saith God, Isai. 49. 15.* He bears too great a Love to Mankind, either to leave or forsake them, 'till they first forsake him. *O Ferusalem, Ferusalem, — how often would I have gathered thy Children together even as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Matt. 23. 37.* As if he had said, *O Ferusalem, Ferusalem, I would have shelter'd thee from evil, I came on purpose to gather you together under my Protection; but ye rejected me from reigning over you; instead of coming to me, ye run from me; yet ev'n then I went mourning after you, calling you back with melting Expressions and endearing Invitations, 'till you run quite out of my sight.* *O Ferusalem, Ferusalem, I have not taken Advantage against thee, neither cast thee off, upon the first, second, or third Unkindness; they were no small Matters moved me to destroy thee.* Thus we see the Greatness of God's Love to sinful Man, a Love without Height or Depth, Length or Breadth, or any Dimensions; a Love passing Knowledge, Eph. 3. 19. Mercy which is called Rich, Eph. 2. 4. Mercy and Love so great towards Mankind, that God hath declared himself to have done far greater Matters for them, than for the Angels; the Wisdom of God delighting it self with the Children of Men before the World was, Prov. 8. 31. and humbling himself so far for them, as in time to take up on him their Nature, and became obedient for them

them *unto Death*, to Redeem their Souls by the *Price of his own Blood*, Hebr. 2. 16. 1 Pet. 1. 2, &c. Now can such Mercy as this is, be consistent with a Decree of Absolute Reprobation, or Rejecting the greatest part of Mankind from having any Interest in his Mercy; but determining them, without the least regard to any Evil done by them, to be tormented eternally in Hell with the *Devil and his Angels, where shall be weeping and wailing, and gnashing of Teeth*? Certainly, to grant this, would be, to make God a Father of *Cruelties*, and not of *Mercies*, and of *Hatred* rather than *Love*; and the Devil's Name, *Satan*, an *Adversary*, a *Destroyer*, may be fitter for him than a *Saviour*; which I tremble to think. Can we say God is *pleased with Mercy*, and yet ascribe, to him such a Decree, which sheweth much more Severity to poor Mortals, than Mercy? Can we say God is *slow to Anger*; and yet say at the same time, he is so ready to punish the greatest part of Men for ever, and that for one Sin once committed, and that, not by themselves in their own Persons, but by another, and imputed to them only? Can we say he his *abundant in Mercy*; and yet say also, it is tied up, and limited to a very few selected Ones; and that if we take in all Parts of the World, there is not above one in a hundred, but what are unavoidably cast away, out of his only Will and Pleasure? Or can we say his *Love passeth Knowledge*, when we see greater Love than this, in Men, and other Creatures? What Father or Mother who hath not quite cast off all Paternal Affection and Humanity, would determine their Children to suffer the most cruel Deaths, nay, intolerable Torments worse than Death, for one Offence only, allow

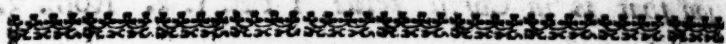
allowing that Offence to be done by the Children themselves, much less to be done by another and imputed to them?

Eutychus. My dearest Friend, I do now most heartily thank you; but above all, I praise my Gracious God, for giving me this happy Opportunity of receiving Satisfaction of all my Doubts and Scruples, whereby I am now restored to my Peace and Comfort, and enabled to *rejoyce with Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory, 1 Pet. 1. 8. And blessed and for ever blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant Mercy, hath begotten me again unto a lively Hope, through the Universal Redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 1 Pet. 1. 3. Rom. 3. 22, 23, 24.*

Epenetus. And blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Mercies, and the God of all Comfort, who comforteth us in all our Tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any Trouble, by the Comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God, 2 Cor. 1. 3, 4. And now, before we part, give me Leave to add this Exhortation: See that you walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, and as becomes the Gospel of Christ, and the Prize of your high Calling: building up your self on your most Holy Faith, praying in the Holy-Ghost, keep your self in the Love of God, looking for the Mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto Eternal Life. And be not weary in well-doing, for in due Season you shall reap, if you faint not. Therefore, my beloved *Eutychus*, I heartily bid you Farewel: Be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. And the

very God of Peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God, your whole Spirit, and Soul, and Body be preserved blameless unto the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. Now unto him that is able to keep you from Falling, and to present you Faultless before the Presence of his Glory with exceeding Joy, To the only Wise God our Saviour, be Glory and Majesty, Dominion and Power, both now, and ever. Amen.

The End of the Eighth and Last Conference.



F I N I S.





ERRATA

PAge 12. line 12. dele *that* ; p. 19. l. 15. dele [; p. 20. l. 22. read *to think* ; p. 31. l. 27. dele *it* ; p. 63. l. 37. read *what* ; p. 67. l. 12. read *called* ; p. 69. l. 1. put a Period after *Obliquities* ; p. 70. l. 36. read *Strength against* ; p. 30. l. 33. read *naught* ; p. 92. l. 3. read *that so* ; *ibid.* dele *to* ; p. 127. l. 30. for *Evangelists*, read *Evangelist* ; p. 160. l. 7. read *these Fields* ; *ibid.* dele ? , put ! ; p. 174. l. 5. read *into* ; p. 175. l. 32. read *stretched*.



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